



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

[Faint, illegible handwritten text]

2 days

)

[Handwritten mark, possibly a bracket or flourish]

ENGLISH
OXFORD
LIBRARY



33087

XL 29.6 [LeH]

Ms. 1032

THE
LETTERS

OF THE LATE
WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.
TO HIS FRIENDS.

A New Edition.

REVISED BY HIS KINSMAN,
J. JOHNSON, LL. D.
RECTOR OF YAXHAM WITH WELBORNE, IN NORFOLK.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR BALDWIN, CRADOCK, AND JOY,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1817.

Whittingham and Rowland, Printers, Goswell Street, London.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

VOL. II.

1784.

Letter	Page
146 To the Rev. J. Newton. Title and motto for a work of Mr. Newton's.....Feb.	1
147 To the same. Our forefathers not nervous; Adam, as he appeared in a dream.....Feb. 10	3
148 To the Rev. W. Buil.....Feb. 22	6
149 To the Rev. J. Newton. Secret charity at Olney; parliamentary debates... ..Feb.	6
150 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Difficulty in writing to strangers.....Feb. 29	9
151 To the Rev. J. Newton. On the Theological Miscellany; Caraccioli.....March 8	11
152 To the same. Style and spirit of Mr. Newton's Apology; East India patronage.....March 11	13
153 To the same. Works of Caraccioli March 19	15
154 To the same. Visit of a Candidate.....March 29	16
155 To the same. Danger of trifling with our Maker. Earthquake in CalabriaApril	19
156 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Beattie and Blair; Origin of languageApril 5	20
157 To the same. Observations on Blair's Lectures, April 25	24
158 To the Rev. J. Newton. Difference of style between Beattie and Blair.....April 26	26
159 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On face-painting....May 3	29
160 To the same. Declines writing a sequel to John Gilpin.....May 8	33
161 To the Rev. J. Newton. Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of his poemsMay 22	36
162 To the same. Same subject.....June 5	37

Letter		Page
163	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Tax on candles July 3	38
164	To the Rev. J. Newton. Mythology of the antients; new Taxes July 5	41
165	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Vincent Bourne. Hume's Essay on Suicide..... July 12	44
166	To the Rev. J. Newton. Madness sometimes hu- morous, and sometimes whimsical July 19	46
167	To the same. Pleasant situation of Lymington; Mr. Gilpin July 28	47
168	To the Rev. W. Unwin. On the inhabitants of the islands in the Pacific Ocean Aug. 14	49
169	To the Rev. J. Newton. Captain Cook's last voyage, Aug. 16	52
170	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Publication of the Task, Sept. 11	54
171	To J. Hill, Esq. Dr. Cotton truly a philosopher, Sept. 11	56
172	To the Rev. J. Newton. Effect of sounds ... Sept. 18	57
173	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Punctuation of blank verse, Oct. 2	60
174	To the Rev. J. Newton. On unconnected thoughts; death of Captain Cook Oct. 9	62
175	To the Rev. W. Unwin. The tendency of the Task, and of all his writings Oct. 10	65
176	To the same. On his poem, Tirocinium..... Oct. 20	68
177	To the Rev. J. Newton. Sandwich islanders, Oct. 30	72
178	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Reasons why an author may wish to keep his work secret..... Nov. 1	74
179	To the Rev. W. Bull..... Nov. 8	77
180	To Joseph Hill, Esq. On the death of his mother, Nov.	77
181	To the Rev. J. Newton. His poems, the Task and Tirocinium..... Nov. 27	79
182	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Tirocinium, 1784 82	82
183	To the same. His poems; picture of Lunardi, Nov. 29	84
184	To the Rev. J. Newton. On the titles to the different books of the Task Dec. 13	80
185	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Inscription of Tirocinium. Compliment to Bishop Bagot..... Dec. 18	88
186	To the Rev. J. Newton. On his poem being called the Task Dec. 24	91

1785.

187	To the Rev. W. Unwin. Death of Dr. Johnson, and an epitaph on him Jan. 15	92
-----	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

Letter	Page
188 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On two small poems, the Poplar Field and the Rose	Feb. 7 95
189 To the same. Reflections on the impatience of authors	March 20 97
190 To the same. Celebrity of John Gilpin	April 30 100
191 To J. Hill, Esq. Description of his <i>Boudoir</i> at Olney,	June 25 103
192 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Account of a violent thunder storm.....	July 27 104
193 To the same. Dr. Johnson's Journal	Aug. 27 107
194 To Lady Hesketh. On her return to England, Oct. 12	110
195 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Translation of Homer, Oct. 22	114
196 To Lady Hesketh. Obligations to a friend not irksome; some account of his affairs.....	Nov. 9 115
197 To the same. Disinterestedness of his affections	120
198 To the Rev. Walter Bagot. Bishop Bagot's Charge,	Nov. 9 121
199 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Publishing his Homer by subscription.....	Dec. 24 122
200 To J. Hill, Esq. Same subject.....	Dec. 24 123
201 To the Rev. W. Unwin. Same subject; anecdotes of the poor at Olney	Dec. 31 124

1786.

202 To Lady Hesketh. Correcting his poems	Jan. 10 127
203 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On his visiting Lady Hesketh; on Homer	Jan. 14 129
204 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Translation of Homer,	Jan. 15 131
205 To the same. Dr. Maty's opinion of the Task..	Jan. 23 133
206 To Lady Hesketh. On receiving a snuff-box with portraits of his three hares	Jan. 31 135
207 To the same. On her promised visit to Olney, Feb. 9	138
208 To the same. Vexations attendant on a variety of criticisms; the Chancellor's promise.....	Feb. 11 140
209 To the same. On their expected meeting at Olney,	Feb. 19 143
210 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Death of Mrs. Bagot., Feb. 27	146
211 To Lady Hesketh. Elisions in some instances allowable.....	March 6 147
212 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On the translation of Homer,	March 13 151
213 To J. Hill, Esq. Same subject.....	April 5 152

Letter	Page
214 To Lady Hesketh. On her postponing her visit; description of the vicarage	April 17 152
215 To the same. Her letters his comfort.....	April 24 156
216 To the same. Dr. Maty's critique on his Homer; description of his own feelings.....	May 8 158
217 To the same. Pain and pleasure on the sight of a long-absent friend	May 15 164
218 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Submission to the will of God; Horace's advice to authors	May 20 168
219 To Lady Hesketh. Gives up meeting her at Newport; lines in the Task; state of his nerves	May 25 171
220 To the same. Beauties of the spring; his spirits less depressed.....	May 29 175
221 To the same. His feelings on her expected arrival. Mr. and Mrs. Throckmorton.....	June 4 and 5 177
222 To J. Hill, Esq. His time much occupied by Homer; the Chancellor's illness.....	June 9 180
223 To the same. Lady Hesketh's visit, and the village of Weston.....	June 19 182
224 To the Rev. W. Unwin. The arrival of Lady Hesketh; residence in Olney; Latin books for Young readers.....	July 3 183
225 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Revisal of his Homer.....	July 4 186
226 To the Rev. W. Unwin. On his Homer.....	Aug. 24 188
227 To the same. On his compositions.....	190
228 To the same. His state of mind; verses to Miss C. on her birth-day	191
229 To the same. On declining to write on a subject proposed to him.....	192
230 Letter-writing, illustrated by a simile in rhyme; state of the nation	194
231 To the same. On his poem of the Lily and the Rose	196
232 To the same. The poet Churchill.....	197
233 To the same. First poetry, a translated elegy of Tibullus	199
234 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Milton's blank verse, and revisal of his Homer.....	Aug. 31 201
235 To J. Hill, Esq. Mischance that happened to part of his translation of Homer.....	Oct. 6 203
236 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Change of habitation,	Nov. 17 204
237 To Lady Hesketh. A poet's hermitage.....	Nov. 26 206

Letter	Page
238 To Lady Hesketh. On the death of Mr. Unwin, Dec. 4	208
239 To Robert Smith, Esq. (the present Lord Carrington.) On the same subject	Dec. 9 210
240 To Lady Hesketh. On the same subject.....	Dec. 9 213
241 To J. Hill, Esq. On the same subject.....	Dec. 9 214
242 To Lady Hesketh. On praise to a poet.....	Dec. 21 215

1787.

243 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Homer's description of slaughter; praise of the author and Mr. Unwin....	Jan. 3 216
244 To Lady Hesketh. On Homer, and his song of the Rose	Jan. 8 218
245 To the same. Obligated by indisposition to suspend his Homer; on dreams, and a visit from Mr. Rose,	Jan. 18 220
246 To Samuel Rose, Esq. His indisposition; Burns' Poems	July 24 223
247 To the same. On his reviving health; Barclay's Argenis and Burns.....	Aug. 27 224
248 To Lady Hesketh. On the family at Weston Hall,	Aug. 30 226
249 To the same. Books he had read.....	Sept. 4 228
250 To the same. On a lady whom he met at the Hall,	Sept. 15 229
251 To the same. On the memoirs of Baron de Tott,	Sept. 29 230
252 To S. Rose, Esq. On leaving the country after the death of his father.....	Oct. 19 231
253 To Lady Hesketh. On a kitten and a leech....	Nov. 10 233
254 To J. Hill, Esq. On his own studies.....	Nov. 16 234
255 To Lady Hesketh. Beauties of Weston; the Clerk of Northampton; on a paper in the Mirror; anecdote of a beggar.....	Nov. 27 235
256 To the same. On his neighbours.....	Dec. 4 238
257 To the Rev. W. Bagot. On his Homer, and Bishop Bagot.....	Dec. 6 239
258 To Lady Hesketh. On a ball, and his translation,	Dec. 10 241
259 To S. Rose, Esq. On his Homer; talents given by nature.....	Dec. 13 242

1788.

260 To Lady Hesketh. On verses by Mr. Merry; inoculation	Jan. 1 245
----------------------------------------------------------------	------------

Letter	Page
261 To the Rev. W. Bagot. On Bishop Bagot, and his Homer.....Jan. 5	247
262 To Lady Hesketh. Reasons for writing few occasional poems; on a print of Bunbury's.....Jan. 19	249
263 To the same. On his own anxiety.....Jan. 30	252
264 To the same. On trouble as the portion of mortality; on reading a book of his Iliad to Mr. Greatheed,Feb. 1	253
265 To S. Rose, Esq. Improvement of time; on the reflection of Glaucus.....Feb. 14	255
266 To Lady Hesketh. On his own melancholy; Hannah More, and Hastings's trial.....Feb. 16	257
267 To the same. On Burke's invective.....Feb. 22	260
268 To the same. A fox chase.....March 3	262
269 To the same. On the book entitled, "The Manners of the Great".....March 12	264
270 To General Cowper. On his poem upon the slave trade. The Morning Dream, a ballad.....	265
271 To the Rev. W. Bagot. On "The Manners of the Great," and his Homer.....March 19	266
272 To S. Rose, Esq. Depression of spirits; Dr. Clarke,March 29	268
273 To Lady Hesketh. On his poem upon the slave trade.....March 31	270
274 To the same. Smollett's Don Quixote; on his friend Mr. Rowley.....May 6	271
275 To J. Hill, Esq. Books that he had lost.....May 8	273
276 To Lady Hesketh. On Mrs. Montague.....May 12	274
277 To J. Hill, Esq. On two prints, Crazy Kate and the Lace-maker; bust of Paris.....May 24	276
278 To Lady Hesketh. Same subject; Mrs. Montague,May 27	277
279 To the same. Sufferings from the East wind; extraordinary advertisement of a dancing-master,June 3	279
280 To J. Hill, Esq. Death of Ashley Cowper, Esq. June 8	280
281 To Lady Hesketh. On the same subject.....June 10	281
282 To the same. On the same subject.....June 15	282
283 To the Rev. W. Bagot. On scenes of horror.....June 17	284
284 To S. Rose, Esq. On a dry season.....June 23	286
285 To Lady Hesketh. On his own expectations; anecdote of his dog Beau.....June 27	288
286 To the same. On the Lime Walk at Weston; account of living authors.....July 28	290

CONTENTS.

xi

Letter	Page
287 To Lady Hesketh. Favourable reception of the Task ; Mr. Bacon, the sculptor.....	Aug. 9 292
288 To S. Rose, Esq. Solicitude for a friend.....	Aug. 18 293
289 To the same. On the oak called Judith ; on improper fears	Sept. 11 295
290 To the same. A riddle ; on finishing the Iliad ; death of a bullfinch.....	Sept. 25 296
291 To the same. Vincent Bourne ; invitation to his friend.....	Nov. 30 298
292 To J. Hill, Esq. Introduction of Mr. Rose....	Dec. 2 299
293 To Robert Smith, Esq.....	Dec. 20 300

1789.

294 To S. Rose, Esq. On memory ; Sir J. Hawkins,	Jan. 19 301
295 To the same. On accidents.....	Jan. 24 302
296 To the Rev. W. Bagot. Progress in Homer ..	Jan. 29 303



THE
LETTERS
OF THE LATE
WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

Nº 146.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON,

February, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM glad that you have finished a work, of which I well remember the beginning, and which I was sorry you thought it expedient to discontinue. Your reason for not proceeding was however such as I was obliged to acquiesce in, being suggested by a jealousy you felt, "lest your spirit should be betrayed into acrimony, in writing upon such a subject." I doubt not you have sufficiently guarded that point, and indeed, at the time, I could not discover that you had failed in it. I have busied myself this morning in contriving a Greek title, and in seeking a motto. The motto you mention is certainly apposite. But I think it an objection, that it

has been so much in use ; almost every writer, that has claimed a liberty to think for himself upon whatever subject, having chosen it. I therefore send you one, which I never saw in that shape yet, and which appears to me equally apt and proper. The Græek word, δεσμος, which signifies literally a shackle, may figuratively serve to express those chains which bigotry and prejudice cast upon the mind. It seems, therefore, to speak like a lawyer, no misnomer of your book, to call it,

Μισοδεσμος.

The following pleases me most of all the mottos I have thought of. But with respect both to that and the title you will use your pleasure.

Querelis

Haud justis assurgis, et irrita jurgia jactas.

Æn. X. 94.

From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard of the manager of the Review you mention, I cannot feel even the smallest push of a desire to serve him in the capacity of poet. Indeed I dislike him so much, that, had I a drawer full of pieces fit for his purpose, I hardly think I should contribute to his collection. It is possible too, that I may live to be once more a publisher myself ; in which case, I should be glad to find myself in possession of any such original pieces, as might decently make their appearance in a volume of my own. At present however I have nothing that would be of use to him, nor have I many

opportunities of composing, Sunday being the only day in the week which we spend alone.

I am at this moment pinched for time, but was desirous of proving to you, with what alacrity my Greek and Latin memory are always ready to obey you, and therefore by the first post have to the best of my ability complied with your request.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Feb. 10, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert, and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it fares with us whom they call nervous. By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up, it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin, and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of punctuating ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear

abroad. But on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery; but physicians, I presume, they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible, that a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made! They, without clothing, would defy the severest season; and I, with all the accommodations that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some danger of choking. They would perhaps have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference however that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices, and enfeebling self-indulgence, of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self. A man indeed, but not in the image of those that went

before me. A man, who sigh and groan, who wear out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never think of the Aborigines of the country to which I belong, without wishing that I had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him; a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly characterized, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward indeed in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes; to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock; the size of his limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution; and who, being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypothesis therefore, there has been a gra-

dual declension, in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me : at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

[TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.]

February 22, 1784.

"I CONGRATULATE you on the thaw—I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable ; what reason therefore have they to rejoice, who, being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour?—The ice in my ink however is not yet dissolved.—It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it prevailed.—The sofa has consequently received little or no addition since.—It consists at present of four books and part of a fifth ; when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished, but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance."

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

February, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I GAVE you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost of nine weeks continuance with very little inter-

ruption ; the longest that has happened since the year 1739. May I presume that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelligence, which perhaps no other of your correspondents will vouchsafe to communicate, though they are as well apprised of it, and as much convinced of the truth of it, as myself? It is, I suppose, every where felt as a blessing, but no where more sensibly than at Olney ; though even at Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of many. The same benefactor, who befriended them last year, has with equal liberality administered a supply to their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous flue that warms my myrtles, he does good and is unseen. His injunctions of secrecy are still as rigorous as ever, and must therefore be observed with the same attention. He however is a happy man, whose philanthropy is not like mine, an impotent principle, spending itself in fruitless wishes. At the same time, I confess it is a consolation, and I feel it an honour, to be employed as the conductor, and to be trusted as the dispenser of another man's bounty. Some have been saved from perishing, and all, that could partake of it, from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the newspapers. I take it for granted, that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should indeed have a better opinion of my documents. But

if the House of Commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information, inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified I take courage; and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, I am not altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and that Lord North is a villain, that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Villain and rascal are appellations, which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct; and the rather, because I feel myself much inclined to believe that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think that secret influence is a bug-bear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose; the mere *shibboleth* of a party: and being, and having always been somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty, I am not able to withhold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it.

Caraccioli upon the subject of self-acquaintance was never, I believe, translated. I have sometimes thought that the Theological miscellany might be glad of a chapter of it monthly. It is a work which I

much admire. You, who are master of their plan, can tell me whether such a contribution would be welcome. If you think it would, I would be punctual in my remittances; and a labour of that sort would suit me better in my present state of mind than original composition on religious subjects.

Remember us as those that love you, and are never unmindful of you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Feb. 29, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WE are glad that you have such a Lord Petre in your neighbourhood. He must be a man of a liberal turn, to employ a heretic in such a service. I wish you a further acquaintance with him, not doubting that the more he knows you he will find you the more agreeable. You despair of becoming a prebendary for want of certain rhythmical talents, which you suppose me possessed of. But what think you of a cardinal's hat? Perhaps his lordship may have interest at Rome, and that greater honour may await you. Seriously however I respect his character, and should not be sorry if there were many such Papists in the land.

Mr. ——— has given free scope to his generosity, and contributed as largely to the relief of Olney, as he did last year. Soon after I had given you notice of his first remittance, we received a second to the same

amount, accompanied indeed with an intimation that we were to consider it as an anticipated supply, which, but for the uncommon severity of the present winter, he should have reserved for the next. The inference is, that next winter we are to expect nothing. But the man and his benificent turn of mind considered, there is some reason to hope that, logical as the inference seems, it may yet be disappointed.

Adverting to your letter again, I perceive that you wish for my opinion of your answer to his lordship. Had I forgot to tell you that I approve of it, I know you well enough to be aware of the misinterpretation you would have put upon my silence. I am glad therefore that I happened to cast my eye upon your appeal to my opinion, before it was too late. A modest man, however able, has always some reason to distrust himself upon extraordinary occasions. Nothing so apt to betray us into absurdity, as too great a dread of it; and the application of more strength than enough is sometimes as fatal as too little: but you have escaped very well. For my own part, when I write to a stranger, I feel myself deprived of half my intellects. I suspect that I shall write nonsense, and I do so. I tremble at the thought of an inaccuracy, and become absolutely ungrammatical. I feel myself sweat. I have recourse to the knife and the pounce. I correct half a dozen blunders, which in a common case I should not have committed, and have no sooner dispatched what I have written, than I recollect how much better I could have made it; how easily and genteely I could have relaxed the stiffness of the phrase, and have cured the insufferable awkwardness

of the whole, had they struck me a little earlier. Thus we stand in awe of we know not what, and miscarry through mere desire to excel.

I read Johnson's Prefaces every night, except when the newspaper calls me off. At a time like the present, what author can stand in competition with a newspaper? or who, that has a spark of patriotism, does not point all his attention to the present crisis?

W. C.

I am so disgusted with ———, for allowing himself to be silent, when so loudly called upon to write to you, that I do not choose to express my feelings. Wo to the man whom kindness cannot soften!

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

March 8, 1794.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I THANK you for the two first numbers of the Theological Miscellany. I have not read them regularly through, but sufficiently to observe that they are much indebted to Omicron. An essay, signed Parvulus, pleased me likewise; and I shall be glad if a neighbour of ours to whom I have lent them should be able to apply to his own use the lesson it inculcates. On further consideration I have seen reason to forego my purpose of translating Caraccioli. Though I think no book more calculated to teach the art of pious meditation, or to enforce a conviction of the vanity of all pursuits, that have not the soul's interests

for their object, I can yet see a flaw in his manner of instructing, that in a country so enlightened as ours would escape nobody's notice. Not enjoying the advantages of evangelical ordinances, and christian communion, he falls into a mistake natural in his situation; ascribing always the pleasures he found in a holy life to his own industrious perseverance in a contemplative course, and not to the immediate agency of the great Comforter of his people; and directing the eye of his readers to a spiritual principle within, which he supposes to subsist in the soul of every man, as the source of all divine enjoyment, and to Christ, as he would gladly have done, had he fallen under Christian teachers. Allowing for these defects, he is a charming writer, and by those who know how to make such allowances, may be read with great delight and improvement. But with these defects in his manner, though (I believe) no man ever had a heart more devoted to God, he does not seem dressed with sufficient exactness to be fit for the public eye, where man is known to be nothing, and Jesus all in all. He must therefore be dismissed as an unsuccessful candidate for a place in this Miscellany, and will be less mortified at being rejected in the first instance, than if he had met with a refusal from the publisher. I can only therefore repeat what I said before, that when I find a proper subject, and myself at liberty to pursue it, I will endeavour to contribute my quota.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, March 11, 1784.

I RETURN you many thanks for your apology, which I have read with great pleasure.* You know of old that your style always pleases me: and having in a former letter given you the reasons for which I like it, I spare you now the pain of a repetition. The spirit too, in which you write, pleases me as much. But I perceive that in some cases it is possible to be severe, and at the same time perfectly good-tempered; in all cases I suppose where we suffer by an injurious and unreasonable attack, and can justify our conduct by a plain and simple narrative. On such occasions, truth itself seems a satire, because by implication at least it convicts our adversaries of the want of charity and candour. For this reason perhaps you will find that you have made many angry, though you are not so; and it is possible that they may be the more angry upon that very account. To assert, and to prove, that an enlightened minister of the Gospel may, without any violation of his conscience, and even upon the ground of prudence and propriety, continue in the establishment; and to do this with the most absolute composure, must be very provoking to the dignity of some dissenting doctors; and to nettle them still the more, you in a manner impose upon them the necessity

* The book alluded to is entitled "Apologia. Four Letters to a Minister of an Independent Church. By a Minister of the Church of England."

of being silent, by declaring that you will be so yourself. Upon the whole however I have no doubt that your apology will do good. If it should irritate some, who have more zeal than knowledge, and more of bigotry than of either, it may serve to enlarge the views of others, and to convince them, that there may be grace, truth, and efficacy, in the ministry of a church of which they are not members. I wish it success, and all that attention to which, both from the nature of the subject, and the manner in which you have treated it, it is so well entitled.

The patronage of the East Indies will be a dangerous weapon in whatever hands. I have no prospect of deliverance for this country, but the same that I have of a possibility that we may one day be disencumbered of our ruinous possessions in the East.

Our good neighbours, who have so successfully knocked away our Western crutch from under us, seem to design us the same favour on the opposite side; in which case we shall be poor, but I think we shall stand a better chance to be free; and I had rather drink water-gruel for breakfast, and be no man's slave, than wear a chain, and drink tea as usual.

I have just room to add, that we love you as usual, and are your very affectionate William and Mary.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

March 19, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WISH it were in my power to give you any account of the Marquis Caraccioli. Some years since I saw a short history of him in the Review, of which I recollect no particulars, except that he was (and for aught I know may be still) an officer in the Prussian service. I have two volumes of his works, lent me by Lady Austen. One is upon the subject of self-acquaintance, and the other treats of the art of conversing with the same gentleman; had I pursued my purpose of translating him, my design was to have furnished myself, if possible, with some authentic account of him, which I suppose may be procured at any bookseller's who deals in foreign publications. But for the reasons given in my last I have laid aside the design. There is something in his style that touches me exceedingly, and which I do not know how to describe. I should call it pathetic, if it were occasional only, and never occurred but when his subject happened to be particularly affecting. But it is universal; he has not a sentence that is not marked with it. Perhaps therefore I may describe it better by saying, that his whole work has an air of pious and tender melancholy, which to me at least is extremely agreeable. This property of it, which depends perhaps altogether upon the arrangement of his words, and the modulation of his sentences, it would be very difficult to preserve in

a translation. I do not know that our language is capable of being so managed, and rather suspect that it is not, and that it is peculiar to the French, because it is not unfrequent among their writers, and I never saw any thing similar to it in our own.

My evenings are devoted to books. I read aloud for the entertainment of the party, thus making amends by a vociferation of two hours for my silence at other times. We are in good health, and waiting as patiently as we can for the end of this second winter.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

March 29, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IT being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchard-side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the

water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid announced Mr. G——. Puss * was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather I suppose climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr. G— advancing toward me shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr. A——, addressing himself to me at that moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it con-

* His tame hare:

sisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. G—— squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a ribband from his button-hole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself however happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and for which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disoblighing somebody. The town however seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. A—— perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. G—— that I had three heads, I should not I suppose have been bound to produce them.

Mr. S——, who you say was so much admired in

your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

April, 1784.

PEOPLE that are but little acquainted with the terrors of divine wrath, are not much afraid of trifling with their Maker. But for my own part I would sooner take Empedocles's leap, and fling myself into Mount *Ætna*, than I would do it in the slightest instance, were I in circumstances to make an election. In the Scripture we find a broad and clear exhibition of mercy, it is displayed in every page. Wrath is in comparison but slightly touched upon, because it is not so much a discovery of wrath as of forgiveness. But had the displeasure of God been the principal subject of the book, and had it circumstantially set forth that measure of it only which may be endured even in this life, the Christian world perhaps would

have been less comfortable; but I believe presumptuous meddlers with the Gospel would have been less frequently met with.—The word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find that he has burnt them.

What havoc in Calabria! every house is built upon the sand, whose inhabitants have no God, or only a false one. Solid and fluid are such in respect to each other: but with reference to the divine power they are equally fixed, or equally unstable. The inhabitants of a rock shall sink, while a cockboat shall save a man alive in the midst of the fathomless ocean. The Pope grants dispensations for folly and madness during the carnival. But it seems they are as offensive to him, whose vicegerent he pretends himself, at that season as at any other. Were I a Calabrian, I would not give my papa at Rome one farthing for his amplest indulgence, for this time forth for ever. There is a word that makes this world tremble; and the Pope cannot countermand it. A fig for such a conjuror! Pharaoh's conjurors had twice his ability.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN,

April 5, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I THANKED you in my last for Johnson; I now thank you, with more emphasis, for Beattie, the most agree-

able and amiable writer I ever met with ; the only author I have seen whose critical and philosophical researches are diversified and embellished by a poetical imagination, that makes even the driest subject, and the leanest, a feast for an epicure in books. He is so much at his ease too, that his own character appears in every page, and which is very rare, we see not only the writer, but the man: and that man so gentle, so well-tempered, so happy in his religion, and so humane in his philosophy, that it is necessary to love him, if one has any sense of what is lovely. If you have not his poem called the Minstrel, and cannot borrow it, I must beg you to buy it for me ; for though I cannot afford to deal largely in so expensive a commodity as books, I must afford to purchase at least the poetical works of Beattie. I have read six of Blair's Lectures, and what do I say of Blair? That he is a sensible man, master of his subject, and excepting here and there a Scotticism, a good writer, so far at least as perspicuity of expression, and method, contribute to make one. But oh the sterility of that man's fancy! if indeed he has any such faculty belonging to him. Perhaps philosophers, or men designed for such, are sometimes born without one ; or perhaps it withers for want of exercise. However that may be, Doctor Blair has such a brain as Shakespear somewhere describes —“dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage.”

I take it for granted that these good men are philosophically correct (for they are both agreed upon the subject) in their account of the origin of language ; and if the Scripture had left us in the dark upon that article, I should very readily adopt their hypothesis

for want of better information. I should suppose for instance, that man made his first effort in speech in the way of an interjection, and that ah, or oh, being uttered with wonderful gesticulation, and variety of attitude, must have left his powers of expression quite exhausted: that in a course of time he would invent names for many things, but first for the objects of his daily wants. An apple would consequently be called an apple, and perhaps not many years would elapse before the appellation would receive the sanction of general use. In this case, and upon this supposition, seeing one in the hand of another man, he would exclaim with a most moving pathos, "Oh apple!"—well and good—oh apple! is a very affecting speech, but in the mean time it profits him nothing. The man that holds it, eats it, and *he* goes away with oh apple in his mouth, and with nothing better. Reflecting on his disappointment, and that perhaps it arose from his not being more explicit, he contrives a term to denote his idea of transfer or gratuitous communication, and the next occasion that offers of a similar kind, performs his part accordingly. His speech now stands thus, "Oh give apple!" The apple-holder perceives himself called upon to part with his fruit, and, having satisfied his own hunger, is perhaps not unwilling to do so. But unfortunately there is still room for a mistake, and, a third person being present, he gives the apple to *him*. Again disappointed, and again perceiving that his language has not all the precision that is requisite, the orator retires to his study, and there, after much deep thinking, conceives that the insertion of a pronoun, whose office shall be to signify

that he not only wants the apple to be given, but given to himself, will remedy all defects, he uses it the next opportunity, and succeeds to a wonder, obtains the apple, and by his success such credit to his invention, that pronouns continue to be in great repute ever after.

Now as my two syllablemongers, Beattie and Blair, both agree that language was originally inspired, and that the great variety of languages we find upon earth at present took its rise from the confusion of tongues at Babel, I am not perfectly convinced that there is any just occasion to invent this very ingenious solution of a difficulty, which Scripture has solved already. My opinion however is, if I may presume to have an opinion of my own so different from theirs who are so much wiser than myself, that if man had been his own teacher, and had acquired his words and his phrases only as necessity or convenience had prompted, his progress must have been considerably slower than it was, and in Homer's days the production of such a poem as the Iliad impossible. On the contrary, I doubt not Adam on the very day of his creation was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for sublime diction, and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 25, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I WISH I had both burning words, and bright thoughts. But I have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day, and having already written a long letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give you as much as I can spare of the present evening.

Since I dispatched my last, Blair has crept a little further into my favour. As his subjects improve, he improves with them; but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as with so much knowledge it is possible to be. His language is (except Swift's) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author, than really tastes them; and who finds that a passage is praiseworthy, not because it charms him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more

largely, had I read the books to myself; but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunderstorm in the first Georgic, which ends with

Ingeminant austri et densissimus imber.

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and therefore most striking. He therefore admires the effects of the thunderbolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him; not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression; and in the instance in question I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such only as the word *ingeminant* could describe, and the words

densissimus imber give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the *Aeneid* contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad that Dr. C—— has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify his choice: fear not—you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and therefore will not fail you upon this. The burning words will come fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

April 26, 1794.

We are glad that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but your accession to their party; but the liberal will say you do well, and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested.

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects that I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so fa-

miliar that we seem to be conversing with an old friend, upon terms of the most sociable intercourse, while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his air is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious that he is addressing the public, and too solicitous about his success, to indulge himself for a moment in that play of fancy which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar, in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man; indeed so amiable, that I have wished for his acquaintance ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I felt myself too a little disposed to compliment my own acumen upon the occasion. For though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find that they had any great news to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my observations into some method, but have not suggested many, of which I was not by some means or other previously apprised. In fact, critics did not originally beget authors. But authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject; genius prompted them with embellishments, and then came the critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come, and, having drawn their rules for good writing from what was actually

well written, boasted themselves the inventors of an art which yet the authors of the day had already exemplified.—They are however useful in their way, giving us at one view a map of the boundaries which propriety sets to fancy; and serving as judges, to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those who have had the hardiness to transgress them.

The candidates for this county have set an example of economy, which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement on both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble; a reform however which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say, who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled; and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry Andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr. A——

was he. Seizing him by the throat, he shook him—he threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his scull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person.—Animated by this example, the other freeholders followed it: and in five minutes twenty-eight out of thirty ragamuffins were safely lodged in gaol.

Adieu, my dear friend,

We love you, and are yours,

W. & M.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 3, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE subject of face-painting may be considered (I think) in two points of view. First, there is room for dispute with respect to the consistency of the practice with good morals; and secondly, whether it be on the whole convenient or not, may be a matter worthy of agitation. I set out with all the formality of logical disquisition, but do not promise to observe the same regularity any further than it may comport with my purpose of writing as fast as I can.

As to the immorality of the custom, were I in France, I should see none. On the contrary, it seems in that country to be a symptom of modest consciousness, and a tacit confession of what all know to be true, that French faces have in fact neither red nor white of their own. This humble acknowledgment

of a defect looks the more like a virtue, being found among a people not remarkable for humility. Again, before we can prove the practice to be immoral, we must prove immorality in the design of those who use it; either that they intend a deception, or to kindle unlawful desires in the beholders. But the French ladies, so far as their purpose comes in question, must be acquitted of both these charges. Nobody supposes their colour to be natural for a moment, any more than if it were blue or green: and this unambiguous judgment of the matter is owing to two causes: first, to the universal knowledge we have, that French women are naturally brown or yellow, with very few exceptions, and secondly, to the inartificial manner in which they paint: for they do not, as I am most satisfactorily informed, even attempt an imitation of nature, but besmear themselves hastily, and at a venture, anxious only to lay on enough. Where therefore there is no wanton intention, nor a wish to deceive, I can discover no immorality. But in England (I am afraid) our painted ladies are not clearly entitled to the same apology. They even imitate nature with such exactness, that the whole public is sometimes divided into parties, who litigate with great warmth the question, whether painted or not? this was remarkably the case with a Miss B——, whom I well remember. Her roses and lilies were never discovered to be spurious, till she attained an age, that made the supposition of their being natural impossible. This anxiety to be not merely red and white, which is all they aim at in France, but to be thought very beautiful, and much more beautiful than nature

has made them, is a symptom not very favourable to the idea we would wish to entertain of the chastity, purity, and modesty of our country-women. That they are guilty of a design to deceive, is certain. Otherwise why so much art ; and if to deceive, wherefore and with what purpose ? Certainly either to gratify vanity of the silliest kind, or, which is still more criminal, to decoy and inveigle, and carry on more successfully the business of temptation. Here therefore my opinion splits itself into two opposite sides upon the same question. I can suppose a French woman, though painted an inch deep, to be a virtuous, discreet, excellent character ; and in no instance should I think the worse of one because she was painted. But an English belle must pardon me, if I have not the same charity for her. She is at least an impostor, whether she cheats me or not, because she means to do so ; and it is well if that be all the censure she deserves.

This brings me to my second class of ideas upon this topic : and here I feel that I should be fearfully puzzled, were I called upon to recommend the practice on the score of convenience. If a husband chose that his wife should paint, perhaps it might be her duty, as well as her interest, to comply. But I think he would not much consult his own, for reasons that will follow. In the first place, she would admire herself the more ; and in the next, if she managed the matter well, she might be more admired by others ; an acquisition that might bring her virtue under trials, to which otherwise it might never have been exposed. in no other case however can I imagine the practice

in this country to be either expedient or convenient. As a general one, it certainly is not expedient, because in general English women have no occasion for it. A swarthy complexion is a rarity here; and the sex, especially since inoculation has been so much in use, have very little cause to complain that nature has not been kind to them in the article of complexion. They may hide and spoil a good one, but they cannot (at least they hardly can) give themselves a better. But even if they could, there is yet a tragedy in the sequel, which should make them tremble. I understand that in France, though the use of rouge be general, the use of white paint is far from being so. In England, she that uses one, commonly uses both. Now all white paints, or lotions, or whatever they be called, are mercurial, consequently poisonous, consequently ruinous in time to the constitution. The Miss B——— above mentioned was a miserable witness of this truth, it being certain that her flesh fell from her bones before she died. Lady C——— was hardly a less melancholy proof of it; and a London physician perhaps, were he at liberty to blab, could publish a bill of female mortality, of a length that would astonish us.

For these reasons, I utterly condemn the practice, as it obtains in England: and for a reason superior to all these, I must disapprove it. I cannot indeed discover that Scripture forbids it in so many words. But that anxious solicitude about the person, which such an artifice evidently betrays, is, I am sure, contrary to the tenor and spirit of it throughout. Show me a woman with a painted face, and I will show you

a woman whose heart is set on things of the earth, and not on things above. But this observation of mine applies to it only when it is an imitative art. For in the use of French women, I think it as innocent as in the use of the wild Indian, who draws a circle round her face, and makes two spots, perhaps blue perhaps white, in the middle of it. Such are my thoughts upon the matter.

Vive vaeque.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

May 8, 1784.

YOU do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own; for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality; and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament, as well as by other causes.

It was long since, and even in the infancy of John Gilpin, recommended to me by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves, when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero, published by Bladon, and to tell me what it is made of. But

buy it not. For, puffed as it is in the papers, it can be but a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last packet but one that I received from Johnson, he asked me if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any; for that to print only the original again would be to publish what has been hacknied in every magazine, in every newspaper, and in every street. I answered, that the copy which I sent him contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose, and that if he thought him now too trite to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgment. I take it for granted therefore that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It may spring from a principle of pride; but spring it from what it may, I feel, and have long felt, a disinclination to a public avowal that he is mine; and since he became so popular, I have felt it more than ever; not that I should have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the latter part of the fifth book of the Task, I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content

therefore with having laughed, and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success, as a poet, upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to an end of the Task, and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and on such, a wise one. But I am mistaken, if Tirocinium do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has, nor can have; and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you.

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your mother's remembrances,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

May 22, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM glad to have received at last an account of Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded that, not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom show mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore enclose a short acknowledgment, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can I imagine without much difficulty convey to him through the hands of Mr. Latrobe. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can very easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr. Bull. What harder task can any man undertake than the management of those, who have reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot, or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present however I am not surprised that, being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited; qualities, that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance. He dined with us since

I received your last. It was on Thursday that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints. But we sent him away cheerful. He is very sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion; and indeed it does them honour; for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moment's regard, when brought by five such coxcombs against a man of his erudition and ability. Lady Austen is gone to Bath.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

June 5, 1784.

WHEN you told me that the critique upon my volume was written, though not by Dr. Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book and the business, I inferred from that expression that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favour, and consequently that he had a right to thanks. But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks which do not seem to be much called for. Yet even now were it possible that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied. I was no other way anxious about his opinion, nor could be so, after you and some others had given a favourable one, than

it was natural I should be, knowing, as I did, that his opinion had been consulted.

I am affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 3, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

WE rejoice that you had a safe journey, and though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that, having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him.— Let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary. It is rather strange that at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one; and stranger still that, being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine bard, and perhaps by a reperusal of some others, whose works we generally lay by at that period of life when we are best qualified to read them, when, the judgment and the taste being formed, their beauties are least likely to be overlooked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should have enjoyed the first fine morning I have seen this month with a peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter, but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses, he is jocular, and laughs, though considering that wheels, and miles, and grooms, were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provoked me still more by reasoning as he does on the justification of the tax upon candles. Some families, he says, will suffer little by it—Why? because they are so poor, that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened, an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery seems worthy of a hero—but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all; a commodity, being once made too expensive for their pockets, will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice therefore, O ye penniless! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but your remaining halfpenny will be safe; instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candlelight, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and, while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he

would remember, that the halfpenny, which government imposes, the shopkeeper will swell to two-pence. I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our Lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight : I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots and sedans in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card tables. I wish in short that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous, is but to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the laborious to despair.

A neighbour of mine, in Silver-end, keeps an ass; the ass lives on the other side of the garden-wall, and I am writing in the green-house : it happens that he is this morning most musically disposed, whether cheered by the fine weather, or by some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts and hinders me, but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse of my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me ever yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

July 5, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A DEARTH of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part, and must be uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present; and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation: during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigours of winter. This fine day however affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends again.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish, which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, are perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities that even a good understanding may

receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems however that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to our own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his Satires with an observation, that there were some in his day who had the hardiness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus, and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader at the same time cause to suspect that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Eleusian mysteries. Yet we know that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox Heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental advantages, were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense, or nonsense, upon the sub-

ject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum if, after advertising a month in the gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him or his measures so little as I do. When I say that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood that I would forfeit such a sum, if I had it. If Mr. Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But at the best, I fear, that he will have to say at last with Æneas,

Si Pergama dextrâ

Defendi possent, etiâ hâc defensa fuissent.

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says indeed that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated it seems to amount to this—"Make the necessities of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax; and if they buy none, the tax, as to them, will be annihilated." True. But, in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing

but Latin authors to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrum.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 12, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I THINK with you that Vinny's line is not pure. If he knew any authority that would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done well to have noted it in the margin. But I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes exposed to difficulties insurmountable by lawful means, whence I imagine was originally derived that indulgence that allows them the use of what is called the *poetica licentia*. But that liberty, I believe, contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in the quantity of a syllable, and never presumes to trespass upon grammatical propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows; but when I recollect the English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Basia amatori tot tum permissa beato.

Or,

*Basia quæ juveni indulgit Susanna beato
Navarcha optaret maximus esse sua.*

The preceding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich, thus managed, will connect itself with them easily, and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen resemble the original so much. At some time or other you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression made by your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the time I hope will come when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last Review; but dipping into it I accidentally fell upon their account of Hume's Essay on Suicide. I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author whom they so much admire. I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands, as blind and presumptuous as himself. God certainly infatuates those who will not see. It were otherwise impossible, that a man, naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others with such palpable sophistry as has not even the grace of fallacy to recommend it. His silly assertion that because it would be no sin to divert the

course of the Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also. For the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country, than the course of that river to the regions through which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions that dwell upon its banks, to all generations. But the life of a man and the water of a river can never come into competition with each other in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher.

I thank you for your offer of classics. When I want I will borrow. Horace is my own. Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years. They are the property of Mr. Jones. A Virgil, the property of Mr. S——, I have had as long. I am nobody in the affair of tenses, unless when you are present.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

July 19, 1784.

In those days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday rambles, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them had such an humorous air, and displayed itself in so

many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences ;

Sunt res humanæ flebile ludibrium.

An instance of this deplorable merriment has occurred in the course of last week at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking.

Yours my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. J. NEWTON.

July 28, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I MAY perhaps be short, but am not willing that you should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there, above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine; to the best of my remembrance, about three miles distance from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock. At least you might have done so twenty years ago. But since that time I think it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and is no longer

a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time there happily, as in all probability you will, perhaps usefully too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr. Gilpin gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope, that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him as a biographer. But as Mrs. Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the deaths of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems however a step towards the truth, to applaud the fruits of it; and one cannot help thinking that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me, for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind my friendship for you indeed is as warm as ever. But I feel myself very indifferently

qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious and unprofitable ones are promised me, and when I see them, I shall rejoice.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other, whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved I suppose to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge; which unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of yours, and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately. But I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both.

We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W. C. & M. U.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 14, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I GIVE you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought

home with them fractured skulls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dangers of the road. Thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security! Having no doubt their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure, they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either.

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no further. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honey-suckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself a voyager in the Pacific ocean. In our last night's lecture we made our acquaintance with the island of Hapae, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way; and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled by

savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this however have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion they might even be our masters. How wonderful too, that with a tub and a stick they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the sweetest music cannot but hear with pleasure. Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character, that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other. Their opportunities of improvement much the same; yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance; while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation, and often entertain me even while I am not employed in reading them.

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can to my new production, and in transcribing it I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare, unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however is not so unproductive of subjects of censure, but that it may possibly supply me with some other that may serve me as well.

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to

write, an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

Heu quot amatores nunc torquet epistola rara!
Vectigal certum, perituraque gratia FRANK!

Yours faithfully,

W.C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

August 16, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAD you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place, and the amusements it affords, I should have had more modesty than to suppose myself capable of adding any thing to your present entertainments worthy to rank with them. I am not however totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mignonette; which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant: and if I have not a hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a greenhouse, a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he: nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment and speculation as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up a balloon from Emberton meadow. Thrice it rose, and as

oft descended, and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up, and came down no more. Like the arrow discharged at the pigeon in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air, and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the soothsayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the most bloody war that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last voyage, and am much pleased and amused with it. It seems that in some of the Friendly isles, they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. O! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage. The paper indeed tells us that the queen of France has clapped this king of capers up in prison, for declining to dance before her, on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was in perfect health. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think that the dance he suffers would be well exchanged for a dance at Anamooka. I should however as little have expected to hear that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art, that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians and astronomers. Defective as they are in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refinement, it seems wonderful that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance, which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance

of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude therefore that particular nations have a genius for particular feats, and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South-sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs. Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr. Gilpin at her brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad that Mrs. Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope that Eliza is better. You will learn from this letter that we are so, and that for my own part I am not quite so low in spirits as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am

Your affectionate friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olaey, Sept. 11, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU have my thanks for the inquiries you have made. Despairing however of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode, as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping, by the end of the month, to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose

taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Leman-street; but must beg that you will give me in your next an exact direction, that it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake; for though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiae of which I have made none: it is besides slavish work, and of all occupations that which I dislike the most. I know that you will lose no time in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in conveying it to Johnson, that if he chooses to print it, it may go to the press immediately; if not, that it may be offered directly to your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum populi* than the former. I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to three thousand two hundred and seventy-six. I imagine therefore that the whole contains about five thousand. I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another letter.

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr. —, whom I had not seen many years. He introduced himself to us very politely, with many thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them. He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen. I only told him in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last pro-

duction. He said that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk. He seemed indeed to emit some sparks when he mentioned it. I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before. Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it is a most innocent one, and partakes not in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable. Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud; for He, who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment.

Yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Sept. 11, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE never seen Doctor Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me, nor did I know, till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his Visions. I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him, as to be pious and sensible, and I be-

lieve no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce. Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more; but I shall always respect him. He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character, every tittle of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected in his mind with the firm belief of an Omnipotent agent.

Yours, &c.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Sept. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FOLLOWING your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that in my judgment of it has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser.

My green-house is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calm-

ness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in the summer; when, the winds being generally brisk, we cannot cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower, in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful, at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing; but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage, that I might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm yard, is no bad performer; and as to insects, if the black beetle, and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble, to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived

between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits—And if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in Heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found; tones so dismal, as to make wo itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 2, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

A POET can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it time enough to give it a leisurely reading before you go to town ; which whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain. I have the whole punctuation to settle, which in blank verse is of the last importance, and of a species peculiar to that composition ; for I know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints and notices, to regulate the inflections, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair that in spite of grammarians must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris*. For I suppose every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you will have it on Saturday the ninth. But this is more than I expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh, in which case it will not reach you till the thirteenth. I rather think, that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe. Add to this, that in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work. The motto of the whole is—*Fit surculus arbor*. If you can put the author's name under it, do so—if not,

it must go without one. For I know not to whom to ascribe it. It was a motto taken by a certain prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but, as I think, to a medal.

Mr. ——— is a Cornish member; but for what place in Cornwall I know not. All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it. But he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again. He was in company with Mr. Throckmorton. With that gentleman we drank chocolate, since I wrote last. The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon. Your mother invited her, and I him, and they promised to return the visit, but have not yet performed. *Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest, Mrs. W——. She was driven to the door by her son, 'a'boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous expression, and should what I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators. Be it known therefore to the Aldusses and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm that Mrs. W—— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed that she was ever there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be, with propriety, said to be Lilliputian.

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller are to settle the conveyance of proof sheets hither, and back again. They must travel I imagine by coach, a

large quantity of them at a time; for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal.

We love you all, jointly, and separately, as usual.

W. C.

I have not seen, nor shall see, the Dissenter's answer to Mr. Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 9, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expense with which it was threatened, convincing me that my letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality. You complain of unconnected thoughts. I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries, and as honest as yours. The description of your meditations at least suits mine; perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground, and assert with the strictest truth that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all. I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way; for when I ask myself what was the last idea (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy what was the last word), I am not able to answer, but, like the boy

in question, am obliged to stare and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, *messieurs les philosophes*, there are moments, when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought, and the consciousness of it, seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however we may both be right; and if you will grant me that I do not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing that though the soul be in herself an active principle, the influence of her present union with a principle that is not such, makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliquium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly, and without disguise; you must therefore either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act, or deny that mine is an human soul: a negative that I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I little thought of being engaged in to-day.

Last night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprise me of the safe arrival of Cook's last voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in Saint James's square. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation however forced itself upon

me with more violence than one, that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favour was converted into an opposition, that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm, in which he suffered more than in any that had preceded it. When he departed he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well disposed to serve him. At his return he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been restored, was magnified to an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing, in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice, or see, that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure; but a mind I think in any degree spiritual cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know that even in a sensible man it is flattered by every species of exalta-

tion. But be it so, that he was in sport—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptized man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honours to be paid him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege*.

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connexions. I have not left myself room to say any thing of the love we feel for you.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 10, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I SEND you four quires of verse, which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of,

* Having enjoyed, in the year 1772, the pleasure of conversing with this illustrious seaman, on board his own ship, the Resolution, I cannot pass the present letter without observing, that I am persuaded my friend Cowper utterly misapprehended the behaviour of Captain Cook, in the affair alluded to. From the little personal acquaintance, which I had myself with this humane and truly Christian navigator, and from the whole tenor of his life, I cannot believe it possible for him to have acted, under any circumstances, with such impious arrogance, as might appear offensive in the eyes of the Almighty.

HAYLEY.

till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough, to give the last hand to the points. I believe however they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters, or its customs. I have paid one; and only one compliment, which was so justly due, that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion (I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton,) but the compliment I mean is to Mr. ———. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you, to whom I disclose the secret; a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of!

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons—first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance

—and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lopez de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of my conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature. Not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience. Not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I have varied as much as I could (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string) I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance; because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible) it may yet boast, that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency; to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance,

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 20, 1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

YOUR letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith in your judgment, and an implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem is a serious business; and the author must know little of his own heart, who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production; and who is he that would not be mortified by the discovery, that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem however which you have in hand will not of itself make a volume so large as the last, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since, I began a piece which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question, whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean that it shall pursue the track of the former. That is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe it to you. But you must see it first; and if, after having seen it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the tittle of an i, I

will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show, that though I write generally with a serious intention, I know how to be occasionally merry. The Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation: but in this article I am entirely under your judgment, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece which now employs me, is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank, It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If, when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the ceiling and cry—"Humph!"—anticipate him (I beseech you) at once, by saying—"that you know I should be sorry that he should undertake for me to his own disadvantage, or that my volume should be in any degree pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely because I think he would have reason to complain of me, if I did not."—But that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand from you that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them. The idea of being hawked about, and especially of

your being the hawker, is insupportable. Nichols (I have heard) is the most learned printer of the present day. He may be a man of taste as well as learning; and I suppose that you would not want a gentleman usher to introduce you. He prints the Gentleman's Magazine, and may serve us, if the others should decline; if not, give yourself no farther trouble about the matter. I may possibly envy authors, who can afford to publish at their own expense, and in that case should write no more. But the mortification would not break my heart.

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order.

Page 140.—Truth generally, without the article *the*, would not be sufficiently defined. There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, &c.; and a reader, not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly, and indeed easily doubt what truth was particularly intended. I acknowledge that *grace*, in my use of the word, does not often occur in poetry. So neither does the subject which I handle. Every subject has its own terms, and religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the scripture. Thence I take the word *grace*. The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially as God's favour in the abstract has no other word, in all our language, by which it can be expressed.

Page 150.—*Impress the mind faintly, or not at all*.—I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run of it, having always observed that a little unevenness

of this sort, in a long work, has a good effect, used, I mean, sparingly, and with discretion.

Page 127.—This should have been noted first, but was overlooked. Be pleased to alter for me thus, with the difference of only one word from the alteration proposed by you—

We too are friends to royalty. We love
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them.

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently snails, and all reptiles that spoil our crops, either of fruit or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure, that Mrs. Unwin so readily understood me. Blank verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity, must rather be singularly perspicuous, to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour, and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose that I have great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess which the whole train of scripture calls us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

I can easily see that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *alma mater*, and I have banged her too. Lay yourself therefore under no constraints that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly free.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewell. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu !

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Oct. 30, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I ACCEDE most readily to the justness of your remark on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich islanders. Proofs of such prowess I believe are seldom exhibited by a people who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement and profligacy of principle are too nearly allied, to admit of any thing so noble ; and I question whether any instances of faithful friendship, like that which so much affected you in the behaviour of the poor savage, were produced even by the Romans themselves, in the latter days of the empire. They had been a nation whose virtues it is impossible not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them, what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower.

Religion in this case seems pretty much out of the question. To the production of such heroism, undebauched nature herself is equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God than her cicisbèos and her fiddlers know now; and indeed it seems a matter of indifference, whether a man be born under a truth which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie; or if there be any difference between the two cases, it seems to be rather in favour of the latter: for a false persuasion, such as the Mahometan for instance, may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly we see a Sandwich islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being impressed by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty that will disgrace them for ever: for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am again at Johnson's, in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books, and called *The Task*. I began it about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half an one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner, because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of

mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller I suppose will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocusses shall peep together. You may assure yourself that I shall take my first opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend! we are well, and love you.

Yours and Mrs. Newton's,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 1, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WERE I to delay my answer, I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling, as I do, a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad for your sake, as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and that the first trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine, as an argument that at least he was no loser by the former. I collect from it some reasonable hope that the volume in question may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions) that your heart fluttered when you approached Johnson's door, and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen when

you came out again. You did well to mention it at the T——s; they will now know that you do not pretend a share in my confidence, whatever be the value of it, greater than you actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post, to tell him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised, and perhaps not pleased. But I think he cannot complain, for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least injured by his reserve; neither should I, if he were to publish a whole library without favouring me with any previous notice of his intentions. In these cases it is no violation of the laws of friendship not to communicate, though there must be a friendship where the communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work secret, and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating from your mind any little weeds of suspicion, that might still remain in it, that any man living is nearer to me than yourself. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an invisible closeness to the last; and the first news that either you or any of my friends would have heard of the Task, they would have received from the public papers. But you know now, that neither as a poet, nor as a man, do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expense.

I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of *Tirocinium*) as fast as the muse permits. It has reached the length of seven hundred lines, and will probably receive an addition of two or three hundred more. When you see Mr. — perhaps you will not find it difficult to procure from him half a dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case, they will all go to the post filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried; and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry that John Gilpin, though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him, the language in some places not being quite so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be; and in one of the stanzas there is a false rhyme. When I have thus given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him with two mottoes, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they will perhaps understand as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles. Knox, in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not, I think, fewer than half a dozen to his *Essays*.

Adieu,

W. C.

[TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.]

Nov. 8, 1784.

THE Task, as you know, is gone to the press: since it went I have been employed in writing another poem, which I am now transcribing, and which in a short time, I design shall follow. It is entitled, *Tirocinium*, or a Review of Schools: the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them; especially in the largest; and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts; to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable; to take home a domestic tutor, where it is not; and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man, as he to whom I am writing, some rural parson, whose attention is limited to a few.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

November, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

To condole with you on the death of a Mother aged eighty-seven would be absurd—rather, therefore, as is reasonable, I congratulate you on the almost singular felicity of having enjoyed the company of so amiable, and so near a relation so long. Your lot and mine in this respect have been very different, as indeed in almost every other. Your Mother lived to

see you rise, at least to see you comfortably established in the world. Mine, dying when I was six years old, did not live to see me sink in it. You may remember with pleasure, while you live, a blessing vouchsafed to you so long; and I, while I live, must regret a comfort of which I was deprived so early. I can truly say, that not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day) in which I do not think of her. Such was the impression her tenderness made upon me, though the opportunity she had for showing it was so short. But the ways of God are equal—and when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice, than to mourn, that she was hidden in the grave so soon.

We have, as you say, lost a lively and sensible neighbour in Lady Austen, but we have been long accustomed to a state of retirement within one degree of solitude, and being naturally lovers of still life, can relapse into our former duality without being unhappy at the change. To me indeed a third is not necessary, while I can have the companion I have had these twenty years.

I am gone to the press again; a volume of mine will greet your hands some time either in the course of the winter, or early in the spring. You will find it perhaps on the whole more entertaining than the former, as it treats a greater variety of subjects, and those, at least the most, of a sublunary kind. It will consist of a poem in six books, called the Task. To which will be added another, which I finished yesterday, called, I believe, Tirocinium, on the subject of education.

You perceive that I have taken your advice, and given the pen no rest*.

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Nov. 27, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ALL the interest that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard; of a friendship, in which distance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it, as a certain truth, that whatever seeming defects, in point of attention and attachment to you, my conduct on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with, I am in reality as clear of all real ones, as you would wish to find me.

I send you enclosed, in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for my title, not otherwise easily accounted for—secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my mat-

* On the 21st of this month the writer commenced his translation of Homer.

ter, though the tenons and mortises, by which the several passages are connected, and let into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus—and lastly, an extract as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you, and as I have admitted into my description no images but what are scriptural, and have aimed as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of the scripture language, I have hopes the manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But the subjects being so various, no single passage can in all respects be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such poetical embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him. Subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favour of a metropolis, that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants: and collaterally, and as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity, and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the universities. A letter which appeared in the General Evening Post of Saturday, said to have been received by a general officer, and by him sent to the press, as worthy of public notice, and which has all the appearance of authenticity, would alone justify the severest censure of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject, I have added a poem, called *Tirocinium*, which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline, that obtains in

almost all schools universally, but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals, that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father, where there is no real impediment; the expedient of a domestic tutor, where there is; and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman, who limits his attention to two, in all cases where they cannot be conveniently educated at home. Mr. Uwin happily affording me an instance in point, the poem is inscribed to him. You will now I hope command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, till dinner comes. That piecemeal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to the work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that (I dare say) you will waive your desire of it. A poem, thus disjointed, cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule—"Nulla dies sine linea"—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it so rigidly, that though more than once I found three lines as many as I had time to compass, still I wrote; and finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance of one day made me amends for the barrenness of another. But I do not mean to write blank verse again. Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause, and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you, and to Mr. Bacon, for your kind remembrance of me when you meet. No artist can excel as he does, without the finest feelings; and every man that has the finest feelings is, and must be amiable.

Adieu, my dear friend!

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

1784.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

THE slice which (you observe) has been taken from the top of the sheet, it lost before I began to write; but being a part of the paper which is seldom used, I thought it would be pity to discard, or to degrade to meaner purposes, the fair and ample remnant, on account of so immaterial a defect. I therefore have destined it to be the vehicle of a letter, which you will accept as entire, though a lawyer perhaps would, without much difficulty, prove it to be but a fragment. The best recompense I can make you for writing without a frank is, to propose it to you to take your revenge by returning an answer under the same predicament; and the best reason I can give for doing it is the occasion following. In my last I recommended it to you to procure franks for the conveyance of Tirocinium, dated on a day therein mentioned, and the earliest, which at that time I could venture to appoint. It has happened however that the poem is finished a month sooner than I expected, and two thirds of it are at this time fairly transcribed; an

accident to which the riders of a Parnassian steed are liable, who never know, before they mount him, at what rate he will choose to travel. If he be indisposed to dispatch, it is impossible to accelerate his pace ; if otherwise, equally impossible to stop him. Therefore my errand to you at this time is to cancel the former assignation, and to inform you that by whatever means you please, and as soon as you please, the piece in question will be ready to attend you ; for without exerting any extraordinary diligence, I shall have completed the transcript in a week.

The critics will never know, that four lines of it were composed while I had a dose of ipecacuanha on my stomach ; in short, that I was delivered of the emetic and the verses in the same moment. Knew they this, they would at least allow me to be a poet of singular industry, and confess that I lose no time. I have heard of poets, who have found cathartics of sovereign use, when they had occasion to be particularly brilliant. Dryden always used them, and in commemoration of it, Bayes in the Rehearsal is made to inform the audience, that in a poetical emergency he always had recourse to stewed prunes. But I am the only poet who has dared to reverse the prescription, and whose enterprise, having succeeded to admiration, warrants him to recommend an emetic to all future bards, as the most infallible means of producing a fluent and easy versification.

My love to all your family.

Adieu!

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Nov. 29, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not at least disgust the public. For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause of being so. I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event—it is a fact in suspense, not in fiction.

My principal errand to you now is to give you information on the following subject: The moment Mr. Newton knew (and I took care that he should learn it first from me) that I had communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmur of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing however that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an extract, by way of specimen, or (which he should like better still) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons (but espe-

cially because I would no more show my poem piecemeal, than I would my house if I had one ; the merits of the structure, in either case, being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it), I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof sheets I have absolutely though civilly refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work ; and to these I have added an extract as he desired ; selecting, as most suited to his taste—The view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *à merveille*. We not only approve, but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favourable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I see in him that good sense and courage that no doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman, two thousand years ago.

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Dec. 13, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING imitated no man, I may reasonably hope that I shall not incur the disadvantage of a comparison with my betters. Milton's manner was peculiar. So is Thomson's. He, that should write like either of them, would in my judgment deserve the name of a copyist, but not a poet. A judicious and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs, but will rather consider what it is in itself. Blank verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner, than verse in rhyme: and why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not. Certainly it was not necessity, that compelled them to it. I flatter myself however that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me to nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all. It is possible that, as a reviewer of my former volume found cause to say that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the reviewer of this, whoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity. At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond, than to overrate my own productions, I am persuaded that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume that I gained by the last. As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had. It is not possible that a book, in-

cluding such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all. In such a case, it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the incident that gave birth to the poem; nor does it appear to me, that because I performed more than my task, therefore the Task is not a suitable title. A house would still be a house, though the builder of it should make it ten times as big as he at first intended. I might indeed, following the example of the Sunday news-monger, call it the *Olio*. But I should do myself wrong: for though it have much variety, it has I trust no confusion.

For the same reason none of the interior titles apply themselves to the contents at large of that book to which they belong. They are, every one of them, taken either from the leading (I should say the introductory) passage of that particular book, or from that which makes the most conspicuous figure in it. Had I set off with a design to write upon a gridiron, and had I actually written near two hundred lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the Sofa, the gridiron should have been my title. But the Sofa being, as I may say, the starting-post from which I addressed myself to the long race that I soon conceived a design to run, it acquired a just pre-eminence in my account, and was very worthily advanced to the titular honours it enjoys, its right being at least so far a good one, that no word in the language could pretend a better.

The Time-piece appears to me (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you) to have a degree of propriety beyond most of them.

The book to which it belongs is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgment, and dealing pretty largely in the signs of the times, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the *Paradise Lost*, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it, but I am sure of the fact. I am mistaken too, if Shakespeare's *Cleopatra* do not call the asp, by which she thought fit to destroy herself, by the same name. But not having read the play these five and twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are however without all doubt convertible terms.—A worm is a small serpent, and a serpent is a large worm. And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested, but the most formidable of all.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 18, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CONDOLE with you, that you had the trouble to ascend St. Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you, that you escaped an ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a balloon under sail, with a philosopher or two on board,

but at the same time should be very sorry to expose myself, for any length of time, to the rigour of the upper regions, at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves I suppose are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind, which must needs accompany them in their flight; advantages, which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of.

The inscription of the poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have therefore an undoubted right to fashion it to your mind, nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared however that the Reviewers, or some of my sagacious readers, not more merciful than they, might suspect that there was a secret design in the wind; and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might introduce friend to public notice, as a clergyman every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a tutor for his children. I therefore added the words—"And of his two sons only"—by way of insinuating, that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more; thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction, which we are both of us incapable of deserving. But the same caution not having appeared to you to be necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not so.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons

for the compliment I have paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place then, I wished the world to know that I have no objection to a bishop, *quâ* bishop. In the second place, the brothers were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon, which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense, and his unfeigned piety. For these causes me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man, who had been publicly traduced; and indeed the Reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion by the sermon preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of his lordship, who, whatever might be the merit of the discourse, in that instance at least could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer.

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr. Newton, that did not please me, and returned an answer to it, that possibly may not have pleased him. We shall come together again soon (I suppose) upon as amicable terms as usual. But at present he is in a state of mortification. He would have been pleased, had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even

out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript. But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it. If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already.

Yours, with our love to all:

W. C.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Christmas Eve, 1784.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM neither Mede nor Persian, neither am I the son of any such, but was born at Great Berkhamsted, in Hertfordshire, and yet I can neither find a new title for my book, nor please myself with any addition to the old one. I am however willing to hope that, when the volume shall cast itself at your feet, you will be in some measure reconciled to the name it bears, especially when you shall find it justified both by the exordium of the poem, and by the conclusion. But enough, as you say with great truth, of a subject very unworthy of so much consideration.

Had I heard any anecdotes of poor dying ~~that~~ that would have bid fair to deserve your attention, I should have sent them. The little that he is reported to have uttered of a spiritual import, was not very striking. That little however I can give you upon good authority. His brother asking him how he

found himself, he replied, "I am very composed, and think that I may safely believe myself entitled to a portion." The world has had much to say in his praise, and both prose and verse have been employed to celebrate him in the Northampton Mercury. But Christians (I suppose) have judged it best to be silent. If he ever drank at the fountain of life, he certainly drank also, and often too freely, of certain other streams, which are not to be bought without money and without price. He had virtues that dazzled the natural eye, and failings that shocked the spiritual one. But *iste dies indicabit*.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, Jan. 15, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

YOUR letters are always welcome. You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing. I never found that a letter was the more easily written, because the writing of it had been long delayed. On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty. It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as yours and mine, productive of few events. At the end of our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of information, upon what terms Mr. Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month (I believe) has

passed, since I heard from him. But my *friseur*, having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and having called at Hoxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not pleased that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect that he was even mortified at being informed, that a certain inscribed poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

I know not whether Mr. ——— has acted in consequence of your hint, or whether, not needing one, he transmitted to us his bounty, before he had received it. He has however sent us a note for twenty pounds; with which we have performed wonders, in behalf of the ragged and the starved. He is a most extraordinary young man, and, though I shall probably never see him, will always have a niche in the museum of my reverential remembrance.

The death of Dr. Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the muse, and composed the following Epitaph*.

It is destined (I believe) to the Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which, when entrusted to a newspaper,

* See the third volume of Cowper's Poems.

can expect but the duration of a day. But Nichols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands, not yet printed, (it is called the Poplar Field, and I suppose you have it) I wait till his obstetrical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my epitaph upon Timy : which (I likewise imagine) has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson. I am easy however upon the subject, being assured that so long as his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man (I presume) of great good sense and spirit, (his letters at least, and his enterprising turn, bespeak him such) a man qualified to shine not only among the stars, but in the more useful, though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon, ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason, why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when for aught that appears the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse ? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever !

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN,

Feb. 7, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WE live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction that I have nothing to say. The event commonly justifies the presage. For when I have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence to which you will not be altogether indifferent, that I have received, and returned to Johnson, the two first proof sheets of my new publication: The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning however I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplar Field appears. I have accordingly sent up two pieces more, a Latin translation of it, which you have never seen; and another on a Rose-bud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which, whether you have seen or not, I know not. As fast as Nichols prints off the poems I send him, I send him new ones. My remittance usually consists of two; and he publishes one of them at a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without putting myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply was transmitted to him in August, and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following anecdote at your Mother's instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk in oblivion. A certain Lord has hired a house at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for a hunting seat. There he lives at present with his wife and daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respects, and (I believe) an amiable one in all. The Reverend Mr. Jones, the curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitation on a Sunday, recommended my volume to their reading; and his Lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed to the said Mr. Jones an ardent desire to be acquainted with the author, from motives which my great modesty will not suffer me to particularize. Mr. Jones however, like a wise man, informed his Lordship, that for certain special reasons and causes I had declined going into company for many years, and that therefore he must not hope for my acquaintance. His Lordship most civilly subjoined, that he was sorry for it. "And is that all?" say you. Now were I to hear you say so, I should look foolish and say—"Yes."—But having you at a distance, I snap my fingers at you, and say—"No, that is not all."—Mr. ———, who favours us now and then with his company in an evening, as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential interpositions that had taken place in his favour. "He had wished for many things (he said) which, at the time when he formed those wishes, seemed distant and improbable, some of them indeed impossible. Among other wishes that he had indulged, one was, that he might be connected with men of

genius and ability—and in my connexion with this worthy gentleman, (said he, turning to me) that wish, I am sure, is amply gratified.” You may suppose that I felt the sweat gush out upon my forehead, when I heard this speech; and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken. So much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense.

Thus far I proceeded easily enough; and here I laid down my pen, and spent some minutes in recollection, endeavouring to find some subject, with which I might fill the little blank that remains. But none presents itself. Farewell therefore, and remember those who are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fire-side, and believe me ever most affectionately yours,

W. C.

They that read Greek with the accents would pronounce the *ς* in *φιλιω*, as an *η*. But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it. I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 30, 1783.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I THANK you for your letter. It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained within the dimensions of a letter, for which I see cause to be more thankful. I was pleased too to see my

VOL. II.

K

opinion of his Lordship's *nonchalance* upon a subject that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing however that, were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner; so very different is the view that men in an elevated, and in an humble station, have of the same object. What appears great, sublime, beautiful, and important, to you and to me, when submitted to the notice of my lord, or his grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or if seen, seems trivial, and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof sheets to the amount of ninety-three pages, and no more. In other words, I have received three packets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me however that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just insinuate to him, that, were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of the last. But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper however, and read it. There I found that the emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negocia-

tions, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me. A great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities—troops are in motion—artillery is drawn together—cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood and devastation—thousands will perish, who are incapable of understanding the dispute; and thousands, who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then? You have composed certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited—be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects—be concerned for the havoc of nations, and mourn over your retarded volume when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have asparagus, and weather in which we may stroll to Weston; at least we may hope for it; therefore come in May; you will find us happy to receive you, and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We are very sorry for your Uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to be in his favour, that season being of all remedies for the rheumatism I believe the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the

celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable—but your own feelings on occasion of that article pleased me most of all. Well, my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, “I know the Author.” But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own.

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion.

Adieu,

W. C.

~~scribble~~

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

April 30, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I RETURN you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin. I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous. I have learned also, from Mr. Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs. Gilpin's return to London, but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it. He tells me likewise, that the head master of St. Paul's school (who he is I know not) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me. Let us hope he will alter his mind; for should we even exchange civilities on the occasion, Tirocinium will spoil all. The great estimation however in which this knight of the stone-bot-

ties is held, may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume of which his history will make a part. Those events that prove the prelude to our greatest success, are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing. The disappointment that Horace mentioned is reversed—We design a mug, and it proves a hog'shead. It is a little hard, that I alone should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story. . . . When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you. I thank you also for writing to Johnson. I likewise wrote to him myself. Your letter and mine together have operated to admiration. There needs nothing more but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will be soon printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of the Task. The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses, that I have known. They would not budge till they were spurred, and when they were spurred, they would kick—So did he—His temper was somewhat disconcerted: but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

.. I was very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last—"I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication."—Now therefore we are friends again. Now he once more inquires after the work, which, till he had disburthened himself of this acknowledgment, neither he nor I, in any of our letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them, but both your

mother and I have studiously deposited them with those who we thought were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only a hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such that they were sure to prevail.

You mention ———. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were schoolfellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again, and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will, like ———, (who was but a boy when I left London) boast of a connexion with me which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour, and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson (I believe) in the life of one of our poets, says, that he retired from the world flattering himself that he should be regretted. But the world never missed him. I think his observation upon it is, that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual is soon filled up; that a man may always be obscure, if he chooses to be so; and that he, who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected.

Your mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilder-

ness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye. I looked again, and discovered a bird's nest, with two tiny eggs in it. By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly. My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent bird. My nest is in a little nook. Here I brood, and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectation.

Yours truly,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

June 25, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room; and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present however it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion; for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter

evenings at Olney. But (thanks to my *Boudoir*!) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town was full, and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience (you will perceive) is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own*.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 27, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You and your party left me in a frame of mind that indisposed me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations which, though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish. But that hope proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. ———

* In this interval *The Task* was published.

made his appearance at the green-house door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man, but with all his recommendations I felt that on that occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present whom we love a little. I have however made myself amends since, and nothing else having interfered, have sent many a thought after you.

You had been gone two days when a violent thunderstorm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was (I suppose) perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression that such an event never fails to affect me with—the moment that he heard the thunder (which was like the burst of a great gun), with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked; but he barked exactly in concert with the thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once; and so precisely the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and to end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner, at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. An house at no great distance from ours was the mark to which the lightning was directed; it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk,

and asleep upon his bed—it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more; but I have seen a woful end of many such conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney since I have known the place; and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. I have received, since you went, two very flattering letters of thanks, one from Mr. Bacon, and one from Mr. Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump, and an humble poet proud. But being myself neither lean nor humble, I know of no other effect they had, than that they pleased me; and I communicate the intelligence to you, not without an assured hope that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written before I have received your letter. Friday.—I must now be as compact as possible. When I began, I designed four sides, but my packet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope. I am proceeding in my translation—“*Velis et remis, omnibus nervis*”—as Hudibras has it; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next. Mr. ——— has just left us. He has read my book, and, as if fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its beauties. I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion.

Be not sorry that your love of Christ was excited in

you by a picture. Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought, that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought because a dog or a cat suggested it. The meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle. He that kneels before a picture of Christ, is an idolater. But he in whose heart the sight of a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian. Suppose that I dream as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy. Will a man tell me that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagination? I hold not with such divinity. To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may.

Adieu! May the blessing of God be upon you all!
It is your Mother's heart's wish and mine.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 27, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WAS low in spirits yesterday, when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar bottle is welcome from his friends on the outside of it—accordingly your books were welcome (you must not forget by the way that I want the original, of which you have

sent me the translation only) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms.

You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem is like a swan, it flies heavily, and never far, but a jest has the wings of a swallow, that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception that my volume meets with, and I believe in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an example, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless, that although the laurels that I gain at Olney will never minister much to my pride, I have acquired some. The Rev. Mr. S—— is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us; and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was, that he was the greatest elephant in the world, himself excepted. If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's *Journal*. It is even more ridiculous than

was poor ——'s of flatulent memory. The portion of it given to us in this day's paper contains not one sentiment worth one farthing; except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think, that to pray for his dead wife, and to pinch himself with church fasts, had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry that he, who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue in all other places, was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort have rather the appearance of religious dotage, than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised, to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules, for the conduct of life, which, though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner, with the above-mentioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough: for the sake of one however I forgive him the rest—he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace by disappointment I would wish to cherish upon every subject, in which I am interested. But there lies the difficulty. A cure however, and the only one, for all the irregu-

larities both of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in a former letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective claims of *who* or *that*. I do not rashly differ from so great a grammarian, nor do at any rate differ from him altogether—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones, for instance were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector *who* saw Patroclus, is right. And the man *that* dresses me every day, is in my mind right also;—because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression, that in respect of the matter of it cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfast-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Oct. 12, 1785.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure. But I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter frank-

ed by my Unele, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself—"This is just as it should be. We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more, are actually returned." You perceive therefore that you judged well when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me. It could not be otherwise than as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprise, for I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years, nor interrupted intercourse, have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value: if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes, in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure; at times too, when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights' Entertainment, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Netley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years. Should I say within this twelvemonth, I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to feel no erasure. Neither do I forget

my poor friend Sir Thomas. I should remember him indeed, at any rate, on account of his personal kindness to myself; but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance) and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done. As it was the last, so it was the best proof that he could give, of a judgment that never deceived him; when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me; that puzzles me. I cannot imagine from what quarter, but it is no matter. I must tell you however my Cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true; I live, and have lived these twenty years, with Mrs. Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me, during the far greater part of that time; it is under providence owing that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind, that has made all that care and attention necessary; an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported; must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject; it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain, neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my Uncle's good health. To enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is much. But to have that late day

enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these post-diluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy for the most part are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my Uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear Cousin, dejection of spirits, which (I suppose) may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer, at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer, at Olney. Ay, and the winters also; I have seldom left it, and except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin, I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my Friend and Cousin,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Oct. 22, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You might well suppose that your letter had miscarried, though in fact it was duly received. I am not often so long in arrear, and you may assure yourself that when at any time it happens that I am so, neither neglect nor idleness is the cause. I have, as you well know, a daily occupation, forty lines to translate, a task which I never excuse myself when it is possible to perform it. Equally sedulous I am in the matter of transcribing, so that between both, my morning and evening are for the most part completely engaged. Add to this, that though my spirits are seldom so bad but I can write verse, they are often at so low an ebb as to make the production of a letter impossible. So much for a trespass which called for some apology, but for which to apologise further, would be to commit a greater trespass still.

I am now in the twentieth book of Homer, and shall assuredly proceed, because the farther I go the more I find myself justified in the undertaking: and in due time, if I live, shall assuredly publish. In the whole I shall have composed about forty thousand verses, about which forty thousand verses I shall have taken great pains, on no occasion suffering a slovenly line to escape me. I leave you to guess therefore whether, such a labour once achieved, I shall not determine to turn it to some account, and to gain myself profit if I can, if not, at least some credit, for my reward.

I perfectly approve of your course with John. The most entertaining books are best to begin with, and none in the world, so far as entertainment is concerned, deserves the preference to Homer. Neither do I know, that there is any where to be found Greek of easier construction. Poetical Greek I mean; and as for prose, I should recommend Xenophon's *Cyropædia*. That also is a most amusing narrative, and ten times easier to understand than the crabbed epigrams and scribblements of the minor poets, that are generally put into the hands of boys. I took particular notice of the neatness of John's Greek character, which (let me tell you) deserves its share of commendation; for to write the language legibly is not the lot of every man, who can read it. Witness myself for one.

I like the little ode of Huntingford's that you sent me. In such matters we do not expect much novelty, or much depth of thought. The expression is all in all, which to me at least appears to be faultless.

Adieu, my dear William! We are well, and you and yours are ever the objects of our affection.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

WHOSE last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me; I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am

sure you will give me credit, though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption ; and that we shall go down together to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste, with which you both relish what you like, and after all drawbacks, upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But above all I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well ; but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted any thing, and given delicately enough to understand that the inquirer was ready to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively, declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure, than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with

yourself a stranger to me. But to you I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition; and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you therefore I reply, yes. Whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please; and add moreover, that my affection for the giver is such, as will encrease to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary however that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse, although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own; the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well-being of life depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connexions demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. Of this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time by the help of good management, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelvemonth. Now, my beloved Cousin, you are in possession of the whole case

as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy—a token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work, consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another. I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear Cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers of proposals, when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now my dear I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it but Mrs. Unwin and her Son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am on the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the Iliad. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprise in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say. A period

which I do not conceive to be very near ! I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done. There is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years. I am not indeed grown gray so much as I am grown bald. No matter. There was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to belong to me. Accordingly having found just enough to curl a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth; which being worn with a small bag, and a black ribbon about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of age. Away with the fear of writing too often.

Yours, my dearest cousin,

W. C.

P. S.—That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items—That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat.

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I AM glad that I always loved you as I did. It releases me from any occasion to suspect that my present affection for you is indebted for its existence to any selfish considerations. No, I am sure I love you disinterestedly, and for your own sake, because I never thought of you with any other sensations than those of the truest affection, even while I was under the influence of a persuasion that I should never hear from you again. But with my present feelings, superadded to those that I always had for you, I find it no easy matter to do justice to my sensations. I perceive myself in a state of mind similar to that of the traveller, described in Pope's *Messiah*, who, as he passes through a sandy desert, starts at the sudden and unexpected sound of a waterfall. You have placed me in a situation new to me, and in which I feel myself somewhat puzzled how I ought to behave. At the same time that I would not grieve you, by putting a check upon your bounty, I would be as careful not to abuse it, as if I were a miser, and the question not about your money, but my own.

Although I do not suspect that a secret to you, my cousin, is any burthen, yet having maturely considered that point, since I wrote my last, I feel myself altogether disposed to release you from the injunction, to that effect, under which I laid you. I have now made such a progress in my translation, that I need neither fear that I shall stop short of the end,

nor that any other rider of Pegasus should overtake me. Therefore if at any time it should fall fairly in your way, or you should feel yourself invited to say I am so occupied, you have my poetship's free permission. Dr. Johnson read, and recommended my first volume.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Nov. 9, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU desired me to return your good brother, the bishop's charge as soon as I conveniently could, and the weather having forbidden us to hope for the pleasure of seeing you, and Mrs. Bagot with you, this morning, I return it now, lest, as you told me that your stay in this country would be short, you should be gone before it could reach you.

I wish, as you do, that the charge in question could find its way into all the parsonages in the nation. It is so generally applicable, and yet so pointedly enforced, that it deserves the most extensive spread. I find in it the happiest mixture of spiritual authority, the meekness of a christian, and the good manners of a gentleman. It has convinced me, that the poet, who, like myself, shall take the liberty to pay the author of such valuable admonition a compliment, shall do at least as much honour to himself as to his subject.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU would have found a letter from me at Mr. ———'s, according to your assignation, had not the post, setting out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me. The *Odyssey* that you sent has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is, that I cannot read it. The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Homer was himself. I am now in the last book of the *Iliad*; shall be obliged to you therefore for a more legible one by the first opportunity.

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription; and he desired me in his answer not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him; adding, that he could make me such offers, as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr. ———, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very obliging and encouraging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such

length and moment, but such as at the same time I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let me sing the praises of the desk which ——— has sent me. In general, it is as elegant as possible. In particular, it is of cedar, beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome small chest, and contains all sorts of accommodations; it is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of a reading desk.

Your affectionate

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Dec. 24, 1785.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

TILL I had made such a progress in my present undertaking, as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should proceed in, and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends that I had an arduous enterprise in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me, that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consider-

ation induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the Iliad, and mean to publish by subscription.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Dec. 31, 1785.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

YOU have learned from my last that I am now conducting myself upon the plan that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negotiation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I make up a complete list of the personages and persons to whom I would have them sent; which in a few days I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson behaves very well, at least according to my conception of the matter, and seems sensible that I have dealt liberally with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome into my pocket," and recommends two large quartos for the whole. He would not (he says) by any means advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas; the half, as usual, to be paid at the time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery. Five hundred names (he adds) at this price will put above a thousand pounds into my purse. I am doing my best to obtain them. Mr. Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little. I have of course written to

Mr. Bagot; who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection intreated me so to do, as soon as I should have settled the conditions. If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once in his company, since I left Westminster, where he and I read the Iliad and Odyssey through together. I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application, which I will get you to show to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her. I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her, during your present stay in town. You observe therefore that I am not wanting to myself. He that is so, has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have cause to complain of me in other respects. I thank you for your friendly hints, and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen. I respect the public, and I respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either. I hate the affectation so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness; and in the present case am sensible how necessary it is to shun them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me. I thank you for all that you have said and done in my cause, and beforehand for all that you shall say and do hereafter. I am sure that there will be no deficiency on your part. In particular I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honour and respectability, when the man you mention applied for samples of my translation. When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse

never. No consideration would have induced me to comply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me that his wife had longed.

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter in behalf of so many who must otherwise have been exposed to it. I wish that you could make a general gaol-delivery, leaving only those behind who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of. You never said a better thing in your life, than when you assured Mr. ——— of the expediency of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts, with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided. When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair for her six children; as soon as the children saw them, they jumped out of their straw, caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions, of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other.

It just occurs to me, to say, that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the end of February. I shall have finished the Iliad in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revision of the whole. You must, if possible, come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take the charge of

its safe delivery to Johnson. For if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second.

Your mother joins with me in love and good wishes of every kind, to you, and all yours.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Jan. 10, 1786.

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch, that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr. ———, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly disposition towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say. You cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted therefore that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should

reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement perhaps when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life that did not undergo variations; and his longest pieces, many. I will only observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But again I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it before, and have no need that I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grubstreet.

My Cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them; and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect

to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

A subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends, and of their friends, into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the Masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

Affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Jan. 14, 1786.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I AM glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh. I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shown her to you. She also was delighted with her visitor, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again; but is under some apprehensions that a tender regard for the drum of your ear may keep you from her. Never mind! You have two drums; and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible for any man to tell me—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector? Is it possible that he could be determined to it by a conceit, so little worthy of him, as that, having made the number of his books completely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake proceed any farther? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy? Tell me also, if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found that he left off exactly where he should; and that every epic poem, to all generations, is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector? I do not in the least doubt it. Therefore, if I live to write a dozen epic poems, I will always take care to bury Hector, and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had a truly kind letter from Mr. ———, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honour James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society, than mine is ever likely to be.

You say—"why should I trouble you with my troubles?" I answer—"Why not? What is a friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry the other?"

You see your duty to God, and your duty to your

neighbour; and you practise both with your best ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would that all the world were so blind even as you are. But there are some in it, who, like the Chinese, say—"We have two eyes; and other nations have but one!" I am glad however that in your one eye you have sight enough to discover that such censures are not worth minding.

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H. a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say.

Yours, my dear William,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Jan. 15, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I HAVE just time to give you an hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has unexpectedly encountered, and at which I suppose that you have been somewhat surprised.

I have a near relation in London and a warm friend in General Cowper; he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new Translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the

work. To this I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here ; but at last acceded to his advice ; and accordingly the day before yesterday I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation they would find the former parts of the work not less so. For if a writer flags any where, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate.....
You may say perhaps (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say) " It is well—but do you place yourself on a level with Pope ?" I answer, or rather *should* answer—" By no means—not as a poet ; but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all ? If I confess inferiority, I reprobate my own undertaking."

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops, that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are ; but your brother, learned as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he

shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend,

Very affectionately,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Jan. 23, 1786.

MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

* * * * *

The paragraph that I am now beginning will contain information of a kind that I am not very fond of communicating, and on a subject that I am not very fond of writing about. Only to you I will open my budget without reserve, because I know that in what concerns my authorship you take an interest that demands my confidence, and will be pleased with every occurrence that is at all propitious to my endeavours. Lady Hesketh, who, had she as many mouths as Virgil's Fame, with a tongue in each, would employ them all in my service, writes me word that Dr. Maty of the Museum has read my Task. I cannot even to you relate what he says of it; though, when I began this story, I thought I had courage enough to tell it boldly. He designs however to give his opinion of it in his next monthly Review; and being informed that I was about to finish a translation of Homer, asked her Ladyship's leave to men-

tion the circumstance on that occasion. This incident pleases me the more, because I have authentic intelligence of his being a critical character in all its forms, acute, sour, and blunt; and so incorruptible withal, and so unsusceptible of bias from undue motives, that, as my correspondent informs me, he would not praise his own mother, did he not think she deserved it.

The said Task is likewise gone to Oxford, conveyed thither by an intimate friend of Dr. ———, with a purpose of putting it into his hands. My friend, what will they do with me at Oxford? Will they burn me at Carfax, or will they anathematize me with bell, book, and candle? I can say with more truth than Ovid did—*Parve nec invidet*.

The said Dr. ——— has been heard to say, and I give you his own words, (stop both your ears while I utter them) “that Homer has never been translated, and that Pope was a fool.” Very irreverent language to be sure, but in consideration of the subject on which he used them, we will pardon it, even in a dean. One of the masters of Eton told a friend of mine lately, that a translation of Homer is much wanted. So now you have all my news. * *

Yours, my dear friend, cordially,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Jan. 31, 1786.

IT is very pleasant, my dearest Cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous; but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself therefore driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz. that I will constitute you my Thank-receiver-general for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my Cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with; for a snuff-box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with crystal, having the figures of three hares in the foreground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest*—and below with these—*Tiney, Puss, and Bess*. For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country fellows, to tie by the leg to their respective bedposts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But

there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment; for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man; but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness; at which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I write to you, my dear, what I have already related to the General, I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once however I will venture.—On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the *ms.* copy of a specimen, that I had sent to the General; and, enclosed in the same cover, notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such; and having nothing so much at heart as to give all possible security to yourself and the General, that my work shall not come forth unfinished, I answered Johnson, that I would gladly submit my *ms.* to his friend. He is in truth a very clever fellow, perfectly a stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of animadversion, where he shall find occasion. It is im-

possible for you, my dearest Cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer, and for that reason if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious, and consequently any delay, that is not absolutely necessary, as much as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the Iliad. It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five; for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing, and upon my own experience I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not, may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you, and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgment I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living, upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was.

I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas ! Alas ! he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved Cousin.

Farewell,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 9, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

I HAVE been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him ; I sent him another yesterday, that will I hope quiet him again. Johnson has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures ; and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that (I doubt not) we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the

hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all; though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May, or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats; and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honeysuckles, roses, and jasmine; and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hares, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he, poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand, stands a cupboard, the work of the same author; it was once a dove-cage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made. But a merciless servant having scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament; and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the farther end of this superb vestibule, you

will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs. Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my Cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure that it is a cask, in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the God is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu! my dearest, dearest Cousin,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 11, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It must be (I suppose) a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep, in short every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well-being at Olney, occupies all our talking time, which is all that I do not spend at Troy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now.

I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next, I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest Cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it, do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in due time. But let Maty be the only *Critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various hands, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill-founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author, whose ill-fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have had the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me also to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved Cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self-importance, had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm, that I could not help taking, when I com-

pared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus huddled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt beforehand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box, that I have had made on purpose; and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through, before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr. Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which I's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have no guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my Cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has no doubt forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C——e, and her Sister, in King-street, Bloomsbury, and there was the promise made. I said—"Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, "I surely will." "These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled, and said—"Let them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof;

and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would.

Adieu, whom I love entirely,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, Feb. 19, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

SINCE so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy ! An enemy however you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance ; I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you : and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted ; and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June ;

and June, my Cousin, was never so wished for, since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded, with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter—sooner or later they will all come out; and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof (a circumstance, that, more than any thing, reconciles us to that measure), they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead; and for my own part I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world, whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing many turns and prettinesses of expression, that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought, that in reality it is no defect; on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves grace-

fully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest Cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again, before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall send it to me, otherwise to Johnson immediately; for he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together. For they have worried me without remorse or conscience. At least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone; but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic; for as sure as you are my Cousin, whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

My friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain, and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a

swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, dear Cousin,

W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, Feb. 27, 1786.

ALAS! alas! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it. By the close of your letter it should seem, that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know by experience that they are neither few nor small; and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before, yet do I sincerely rejoice in this, that whereas there is but one true comforter in the universe, under afflictions such as yours, you both know him, and know where to seek him. I thought you a man the most happily mated, that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish that, short as my acquaintance with her was, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs. Unwin sympathises with you also most sincerely, and you neither are, nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers as we can make at Olney. I will not detain you longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to com-

mit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you
a sorrowful adieu!

Adieu! ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, March 6, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

YOUR opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world; and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The*, is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, or perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, The perpetual use of it in our language is to us miserable poets attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that a fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily too, (unless elision prevents it) by this abominable intruder; and, which is worse in my account, open

vowels are continually the consequence—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, The French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so) the practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by Milton, who of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton indeed has dared to say that he had a bad one; for which he deserves, as far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but there is still a fifthly behind, and it is this, that the custom of abbreviating *The* belongs to the style in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that style would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that style I might say I' th' tempest, I' th' door-way, &c., which however I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

“Than th' whole broad Hellespont in all its parts,”

my licence is not equally exceptionable, because *W*, though he rank as a consonant in the word *whole*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear; and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say

I still, I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day; neither would I have pelted you, my dearest cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections which you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I wave them, and will allow to *The* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth, whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage,

“ Softly he plac'd his hand
“ On th' old man's hand, and push'd it gently away.”

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend, the General, sent me his opinion of the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, “ With this part I was particularly pleased; there is nothing in poetry more descriptive.” Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various, there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the books of my Homer, as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing to do that which I hope may

be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it, when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr. Stanley's letter—several compliments were paid me, on the subject of that first volume, by my own friends; but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise; I only heard by a side wind, that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for.

W. C.

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens, that I hope shall be verified by the event.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

March 13, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SEEM to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a letter, but a scrap that I shall send you. I could tell you things that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you, but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation, and bestowing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic that I have ever heard of. He is a Swiss; has an accurate knowledge of English, and for his knowledge of Homer has, I verily believe, no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast as I finish them off, and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you, that he is very much pleased with what he has seen. Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

April 5, 1786.

I DID, as you suppose, bestow all possible consideration on the subject of an apology for my Homeric undertaking. I turned the matter about in my mind an hundred different ways, and in every way in which it would present itself found it an impracticable business. It is impossible for me, with what delicacy soever I may manage it, to state the objections that lie against Pope's translation, without incurring odium, and the imputation of arrogance; foreseeing this danger, I choose to say nothing.

W. C.

P. S.—You may well wonder at my courage, who have undertaken a work of such enormous length. You would wonder more if you knew, that I translated the whole Iliad with no other help than a Clavis. But I have since equipped myself better for this immense journey, and am revising the work in company with a good commentator.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 17, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

IF you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will. He says, and as beautiful as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason

he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay.

* * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour, nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the roundabout by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter, but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter

into treaties of friendship with new faces, but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelve-month ! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation ; that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprising me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has reason to love me to the degree that he does ? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is, and ever shall be so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions, lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammations, it is probable that they will always be ; but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present.

One would almost suppose that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it; and so content that, though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort, or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again; I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr. Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house, but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O fie cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's inquiries about me. If he takes it into that inimitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once is certain. The Duchess of ———, who in the world set her agoing? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit,

I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep, but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, April 24, 1786.

YOUR letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed; and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin; follow my laudable example, write when you can, take Time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters I hear you talk, and I love talking-letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me, or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a

few more revolutions I shall not have a scrap left, and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance; but when you say that you are a Cowper (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart) you must not forget that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come. A pretty story truly. I am a *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled, as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me, for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel, above alluded to, came from—whom do you think? From ———, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned, and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from ——— I received so many years since,

that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but, being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come.

Adieu,

W. C.

You inquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as of our rides. They are beautiful. You inquire also concerning a cellar. You have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks and then!

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 8, 1786.

I DID not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me from another quarter. When I wrote

to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it by hearsay. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself enclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter indeed that he had cut from the newspaper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured, and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the translation is far from exact, is best known to himself. For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry; and prose translations of Homer are not wanted, the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hypercriticisms, I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows;

“ One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven

knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way at once so plain, and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which on the whole I admire exceedingly, thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original; though having here neither Homer, nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring, that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme."——

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them, by vexatious objections made without end by ——, and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for ——'s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy—but I would mumble her well, if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the Chancellor with a view to emolument. I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet years after I composed them; not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces, of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper

size. On that occasion it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word I was called down to Dr. Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme; then he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I; come and assist Mrs. Unwin in the re-establishment of your Cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in us your constant companions, two who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any danger of trouble, it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me; and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me; but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If there is a creature under Heaven, from whose co-operations with Mrs. Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself. I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive, but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life.

Of how much importance is an author to himself! I

return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention. I mean of the word *hand*. In the original there is not a repetition of it. But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it a *modern* invention. In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound. Colman, who, in his judgment of classical matters, is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression.*" I could easily change it. But the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low. I rather feel myself disinclined to it.

One evening last week, Mrs. Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove opposite to the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door. They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty. It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours. When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours. If you, my Cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered up all my rhetoric to recommend it to you. You might have it for ever without danger of ejection, whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six. The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw. Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr. Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter. A most unfortunate

mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence. Just before he left Weston last year for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs, that lined a serpentine walk in a delightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece that you remember was called the Shrubbery. The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and faggotted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig; nothing but stumps about as high as my ancle. Mrs. T. told us that she never saw her husband so angry in her life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion. But had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it, both from the papers, and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he live, and live to be still the support of Government! If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it. But Heaven knows, that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.—May God be ever with you, my beloved Cousin!

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 15, 1786.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

FROM this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently and most comfortably hope that before the fifteenth of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded, nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard; and (blessed be God!) they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then in the course of an existence, whose hue is for the most part sable, a day turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it (canst thou tell me?) that together with all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful; flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting; and such I suppose feel you; and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know beforehand that they will increase with every

turn of the wheels, that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been foreordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is nothing such, no, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none, if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams. They are illusions of the judgment. Some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us; and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of it. Nothing that is such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I. But we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be

true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long I trust as we ourselves shall survive it.

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant, in the extreme; am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last would at any time restore my spirits, and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have (what perhaps you little suspect me of) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing that, till lately, I stole through life without undertaking any thing, yet

always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that at so late a period was yet open to me; and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing therefore that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious Cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me. But you will not; and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath* (that is to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it) more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymers, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr. Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise; and the consequence has been that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Bles-

sings on you for the hint that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is—"Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more."

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Okeby, May 20, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

ABOUT three weeks since I met your Sister Chester at Mr. Throckmorton's, and from her learned that you are at Blithfield, and in health. Upon the encouragement of this information it is that I write now; I should not otherwise have known with certainty where to find you, or have been equally free from the fear of unseasonable intrusion. May God be with you, my friend, and give you a just measure of submission to his will, the most effectual of all remedies for the evils of this changing scene. I doubt not that he has granted you this blessing already, and may he still continue it!

Now I will talk a little about myself. For except myself, living in this *Terrarum angulo*, what can I have to talk about? In a scene of perfect tranquillity, and the profoundest silence, I am kicking up the dust of heroic narrative, and besieging Troy again. I told you that I had almost finished the translation of the Iliad, and I verily thought so. But I was never more mistaken. By the time when I had reached the end of the poem, the first book of my version was a twelve-

month old. When I came to consider it after having laid it by so long, it did not satisfy me. I set myself to mend it, and I did so. But still it appeared to me improvable, and that nothing would so effectually secure that point as to give the whole book a new translation. With the exception of very few lines I have so done, and was never in my life so convinced of the soundness of Horace's advice to publish nothing in haste; so much advantage have I derived from doing that twice which I thought I had accomplished notably at once. He indeed recommends nine years' imprisonment of your verses before you send them abroad; but the ninth part of that time is I believe as much as there is need of to open a man's eyes upon his own defects, and to secure him from the danger of premature self-approbation. Neither ought it to be forgotten that nine years make so wide an interval between the cup and the lip, that a thousand things may fall out between. New engagements may occur, which may make the finishing of that which a poet has begun, impossible. In nine years he may rise into a situation, or he may sink into one utterly incompatible with his purpose. His constitution may break in nine years, and sickness may disqualify him for improving what he enterprised in the days of health. His inclination may change, and he may find some other employment more agreeable, or another poet may enter upon the same work, and get the start of him. Therefore, my friend Horace, though I acknowledge your principle to be good, I must confess that I think the practice you would ground upon it carried to an extreme. The rigour that I exercised upon the first book, I intend to

exercise upon all that follow, and have now actually advanced into the middle of the seventh, no where admitting more than one line in fifty of the first translation. You must not imagine that I had been careless and hasty in the first instance. In truth I had not; but in rendering so excellent a poet as Homer into our language, there are so many points to be attended to both in respect of language and numbers, that a first attempt must be fortunate indeed if it does not call aloud for a second. You saw the specimen, and you saw (I am sure) one great fault in it; I mean the harshness of some of the elisions. I do not altogether take the blame of these to myself, for into some of them I was actually driven and hunted by a series of reiterated objections made by a critical friend, whose scruples and delicacies teased me out of all my patience. But no such monsters will be found in the volume.

Your brother Chester has furnished me with Barnes's Homer, from whose notes I collect here and there some useful information, and whose fair and legible type preserves me from the danger of being as blind as was my author. I saw a Sister of yours at Mr. Throckmorton's, but I am not good at making myself heard across a large room, and therefore nothing passed between us. I felt however that she was my friend's Sister, and much esteemed her for your sake.

Ever yours,

W. C.

P: S. The swan is called *argutus* (I suppose) *a non arguendo*, and *canorus a non canendo*. But whether he be dumb or vocal, more poetical than the eagle or

less, it is no matter. A feather of either, in token of your approbation and esteem, will never, you may rest assured, be an offence to me.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 25, 1786.

I HAVE at length, my Cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a bandbox, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline, and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them

aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loath to know it again.

Last Monday in the evening we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual. This mistake we discovered, while we were in the wilderness. So, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears so he may. In which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me, that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion, that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my Cousin, that you have sent me. All jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language, and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman. The taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the Task was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend.—We were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines—

The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,
And seeking grace t' improve the present good,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *non-chalante*, "Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they?" He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied—"O, I will tell you where they must be—in the Night Thoughts." I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not undeceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of the letter-writer's opinion, but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence, at least in poetry.

Assure yourself, my dearest Cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond

measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines; and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine neither, that I am on the whole in any great degree subject to nervous affections; occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection. But at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me; I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Bluedevil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved Cousin. God grant that our friendship which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever.

For you must know, that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to

unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this.
Therefore I am, and must, and will be,

Yours for ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

THOU dear, comfortable Cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure; for which therefore I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon (and happy shall I be to do so), your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long; to my impatience at least it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes. Still however there will be roses, and jasmine, and honeysuckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights at least will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the Iliad shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop, and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table. We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame. I am writing in it now. It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time. I rose an hour sooner than usual, this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dewdrops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms. Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his Muse.

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear Cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection. Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly. Do not suppose, or suspect that I treat you with reserve; there is nothing in which I am concerned that

you shall not be made acquainted with. But the tale is too long for a letter. I will only add for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion of its removal. I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you. Guess then, my beloved cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure, but peace of mind, at least an additional share of it. At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney, may perhaps make it an abiding one.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786.

AH ! my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you. I have no fears of *you*. On the contrary am as bold as a lion. I wish that your carriage were even now at the door. You should soon see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? who used to read to you, laugh with you, till our sides have ached, at any thing, or nothing? And am I in these respects at all altered? You will not find me

so ; but just as ready to laugh, and to wander, as you ever knew me. A cloud perhaps may come over me now and then, for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical cousin with whom I have performed all these feats ? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's, in Norfolk Street ? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle and aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster.) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows ; that I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my cousin, in whom I always delighted, and in whom I doubt not that I shall delight even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature who I suppose was never punctual in his life ! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise, he shall make my coach, when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner—we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of

which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore all but one I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important subject—their own religion. I happened to say that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times no doubt to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary. Mr. Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin.*" I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice. I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure to myself. The two ladies in the mean time were tête-à-tête in the drawing-room. Their conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs. Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz. myself. In the first place, Mrs. Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it.

In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of. Let it suffice to say that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs. Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs.

Unwin, who will tell you many a good long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself. I am however not at all in arrear to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know them, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the Task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend.

I received yesterday from the General another letter of T. S. An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf, I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply.

My dearest cousin adieu! I hope to write to you but once more before we meet. But Oh! this coach-maker, and Oh! this holiday week!

Yours, with impatient desire to see you.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry is as you may suppose stolen. Homer is urgent. Much is done, but much remains undone, and no schoolboy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am. You will therefore excuse me if at present I am both unfrequent and short.

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it. The first attack was

dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still. It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again if he survive; yet of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connexion never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse, which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement.

I had a letter some time since from your sister Fanny, that gave me great pleasure. Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately. They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again. The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten, when we are gone who composed it; but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer—

“To whom replied the Devil yard-long-tail’d.”

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it. I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this

town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, June 19, 1786.

MY dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney. Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here but while I live.

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation. At a village two miles distant we have hired a house of Mr. Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive. It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds. In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter; two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs. Unwin's have suffered materially.

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them.

W.C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

Olney, July 3, 1786.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

AFTER a long silence I begin again. A day given to my friends, is a day taken from Homer, but to such an interruption, now and then occurring, I have no objection. Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases every body, and is pleased in her turn with every thing she finds at Olney; is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her. This disposition in her is the more comfortable, because it is not the humour of the day, a sudden flash of benevolence and good spirits, occasioned merely by a change of scene, but it is her natural turn, and has governed all her conduct ever since I knew her first. We are consequently happy in her society, and shall be happier still to have you to partake with us in our joy. I am fond of the sound of bells, but was never more pleased with those of Olney than when they rang her into her new habitation. It is a compliment that our performers upon those instruments have never paid to any other personage (Lord Dartmouth excepted) since we knew the town. In short, she is, as she ever was, my pride and my joy, and I am delighted with every thing that means to do her honour. Her first appearance was too much for me; my spirits, instead of being gently raised, as I had inadvertently supposed they would be, broke

down with me under the pressure of too much joy, and left me flat, or rather melancholy, throughout the day, to a degree that was mortifying to myself, and alarming to her. But I have made amends for this failure since, and in point of cheerfulness have far exceeded her expectations, for she knew that sable had been my suit for many years.

And now I shall communicate news that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother lived in it. Your view of it was not only just, but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purposes of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand. The bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us, and the expense of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr. Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty. I have my cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us; and the house is large enough to take us, and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will I hope prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood, there

we shall have most agreeable neighbours in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy smelling fumes of the marsh miasma; there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer; there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. So far is well, the rest is left to Heaven.

I have hardly left myself room for an answer to your queries concerning my friend John, and his studies. I should recommend the civil war of Cæsar, because he wrote it, who ranks I believe as the best writer, as well as soldier, of his day. There are books (I know not what they are, but you do, and can easily find them) that will inform him clearly of both the civil and military management of the Romans, the several officers, I mean, in both departments; and what was the peculiar province of each. The study of some such book would I should think prove a good introduction to that of Livy, unless you have a Livy with notes to that effect. A want of intelligence in those points has heretofore made the Roman history very dark and difficult to me; therefore I thus advise.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, July 4, 1786.

I REJOICE, my dear friend, that you have at last received my proposals, and most cordially thank you for all your labours in my service. I have friends in the world who, knowing that I am apt to be careless when left to myself, are determined to watch over me with a jealous eye upon this occasion. The consequence will be, that the work will be better executed, but more tardy in the production. To them I owe it, that my translation, as fast as it proceeds, passes under a revisal of a most accurate discernor of all blemishes. I know not whether I told you before, or now tell you for the first time, that I am in the hands of a very extraordinary person. He is intimate with my bookseller, and voluntarily offered his service. I was at first doubtful, whether to accept it or not; but finding that my friends abovesaid were not to be satisfied on any other terms, though myself a perfect stranger to the man and his qualifications, except as he was recommended by Johnson, I at length consented, and have since found great reason to rejoice that I did. I called him an extraordinary person, and such he is. For he is not only versed in Homer, and accurate in his knowledge of the Greek to a degree that entitles him to that appellation, but, though a foreigner, is a perfect master of our language, and has exquisite taste in English poetry. By his assistance I have improved many passages, supplied many oversights, and corrected many mistakes, such as will of course escape the most

diligent and attentive labourer in such a work. I ought to add, because it affords the best assurance of his zeal and fidelity, that he does not toil for hire, nor will accept of any premium, but has entered on this business merely for his amusement. In the last instance my sheets will pass through the hands of our old schoolfellow Colman, who has engaged to correct the press, and make any little alterations that he may see expedient. With all this precaution, little as I intended it once, I am now well satisfied. Experience has convinced me that other eyes than my own are necessary, in order that so long and arduous a task may be finished as it ought, and may neither discredit me, nor mortify and disappoint my friends. You, who I know interest yourself much and deeply in my success, will I dare say be satisfied with it too. Pope had many aids, and he who follows Pope ought not to walk alone.

Though I announce myself by my very undertaking to be one of Homer's most enraptured admirers, I am not a blind one. Perhaps the speech of Achilles given in my specimen is, as you hint, rather too much in the moralizing strain, to suit so young a man, and of so much fire. But whether it be or not, in the course of the close application that I am forced to give to my author, I discover inadvertencies not a few; some perhaps that have escaped even the commentators themselves; or perhaps in the enthusiasm of their idolatry, they resolved that they should pass for beauties. Homer however; say what they will, was man, and in all the works of man, especially in a work of such length and variety, many things will of necessity occur, that

might have been better. Pope and Addison had a Dennis; and Dennis, if I mistake not, held up as he has been to scorn and detestation, was a sensible fellow, and passed some censures upon both those writers that, had they been less just, would have hurt them less. Homer had his Zoilus; and perhaps if we knew all that Zoilus said, we should be forced to acknowledge that sometimes at least he had reason on his side. But it is dangerous to find any fault at all with what the world is determined to esteem faultless.

I rejoice, my dear friend, that you enjoy some composure, and cheerfulness of spirits: may God preserve and increase to you so great a blessing!

I am affectionately and truly yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

August 24, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I CATCH a minute by the tail and hold it fast, while I write to you. The moment it is fled I must go to breakfast. I am still occupied in refining and polishing, and shall this morning give the finishing hand to the seventh book. Fuseli does me the honour to say that the most difficult, and most interesting parts of the poem, are admirably rendered. But because he did not express himself equally pleased with the more pedestrian parts of it, my labour therefore has been principally given to the dignification of them; not but that I have retouched considerably, and made

better still the best. In short I hope to make it all of a piece, and shall exert myself to the utmost to secure that desirable point. A storyteller, so very circumstantial as Homer, must of necessity present us often with much matter in itself capable of no other embellishment than purity of diction, and harmony of versification, can give to it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est.* For our language, unless it be very severely chastised, has not the terseness, nor our measure the music of the Greek. But I shall not fail through want of industry.

We are likely to be very happy in our connexion with the Throckmortons. His reserve and mine wear off; and he talks with great pleasure of the comfort that he proposes to himself from our winter-evening conversations. His purpose seems to be, that we should spend them alternately with each other. Lady Hesketh transcribes for me at present. When she is gone, Mrs. Throckmorton takes up that business, and will be my lady of the ink-bottle for the rest of the winter. She solicited herself that office.

Believe me,

My dear William, truly yours,

W. C.

Mr. Throckmorton will (I doubt not) procure Lord Petre's name, if he can, without any hint from me. He could not interest himself more in my success, than he seems to do. Could he get the Pope to subscribe, I should have him; and should be glad of him and the whole Conclave.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOU are my mahogany box, with a slip in the lid of it, to which I commit my productions of the lyric kind, in perfect confidence that they are safe, and will go no farther. All who are attached to the jingling art have this peculiarity, that they would find no pleasure in the exercise, had they not one friend at least to whom they might publish what they have composed. If you approve my Latin, and your Wife and Sister my English, this, together with the approbation of your Mother, is fame enough for me.

He who cannot look forward with comfort, must find what comfort he can in looking backward. Upon this principle, I the other day sent my imagination upon a trip thirty years behind me. She was very obedient, and very swift of foot, presently performed her journey, and at last set me down in the sixth form at Westminster. I fancied myself once more a school-boy, a period of life in which, if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally unacquainted with its contrary. No manufacturer of waking dreams ever succeeded better in his employment than I do. I can weave such a piece of tapestry in a few minutes, as not only has all the charms of reality, but is embellished also with a variety of beauties which, though they never existed, are more captivating than any that ever did—accordingly I was a schoolboy in high favour with the master, received a silver groat for my exercise, and had the pleasure of seeing it sent from

form to form, for the admiration of all who were able to understand it. Do you wish to see this highly applauded performance? It follows on the other side.

(TORN OFF.)

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

YOU are sometimes indebted to bad weather, but more frequently to a dejected state of mind, for my punctuality as a correspondent. This was the case when I composed that tragi-comic ditty for which you thank me; my spirits were exceeding low, and having no fool or jester at hand, I resolved to be my own. The end was answered; I laughed myself, and I made you laugh. Sometimes I pour out my thoughts in a mournful strain, but those sable effusions your Mother will not suffer me to send you, being resolved that nobody shall share with me the burthen of my melancholy but herself. In general you may suppose that I am remarkably sad when I seem remarkably merry. The effort we make to get rid of a load is usually violent in proportion to the weight of it. I have seen at Sadler's Wells a tight little fellow dancing with a fat man upon his shoulders; to those who looked at him, he seemed insensible of the incumbrance, but if a physician had felt his pulse, when the feat was over, I suppose he would have found the effect of it there. Perhaps you remember the Undertakers' dance in the Rehearsal, which they perform in crape

hat-bands and black cloaks, to the tune of "Hob or Nob," one of the sprightliest airs in the world. Such is my fiddling, and such is my dancing; but they serve a purpose which at some certain times could not be so effectually promoted by any thing else.

I have endeavoured to comply with your request, though I am not good at writing upon a given subject. Your Mother however comforts me by her approbation, and I steer myself in all that I produce by her judgment. If she does not understand me at the first reading, I am sure the lines are obscure, and always alter them; if she laughs, I know it is not without reason; and if she says, "that's well, it will do"—I have no fear lest any body else should find fault with it. She is my lord chamberlain, who licenses all I write*.

If you like it, use it. If not, you know the remedy. It is serious, yet epigrammatic—like a bishop at a ball!

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you; but though I have had many thoughts upon the subject you propose to my consideration, I have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking. I applaud your purpose, for the sake of

* The verses to Miss C—— on her birth day (vide Poems, vol. 3.) were inserted here.

the principle from which it springs ; but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon, as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention. The very persons to whom you would address your remonstrance, are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity ; years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversation at polite tables ; they have been frequently mentioned in both houses of parliament ; and I suppose there is hardly a member of either, who would not immediately assent to the necessity of reformation, were it proposed to him in a reasonable way. But there it stops ; and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal in which they are at present deplorably defective. A religious man is unfeignedly shocked, when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes ; a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how many do you suppose there are among our worthy representatives, that come under either of these descriptions ? If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt-liquor, to reduce the number of venders. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of bishops would find it difficult to overrule. And with respect to the violation of oaths, till a certain name is more generally respected than it

is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt to discourage you in so laudable an enterprise; but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation therefore written by me, by hopeless desponding me, would be flat, insipid, and uninteresting; and disgrace the cause, instead of serving it. If after what I have said however you still retain the same sentiments, *Macte esto virtute tuâ*, there is nobody better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Adieu, my dear friend,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I WRITE under the impression of a difficulty not easily surmounted, the want of something to say. Letter-spinning is generally more entertaining to the writer than the reader; for your sake therefore I would avoid it, but a dearth of materials is very apt to betray one into a trifling strain, in spite of all our endeavours to be serious.

I left off on Saturday, this present being Monday morning, and I renew the attempt, in hopes that I may possibly catch some subject by the end, and be more successful.

So have I seen the maids in vain.
Tumble and tease a tangled skein:
They bite the lip, they scratch the head,
And cry—"the deuce is in the thread!"
They torture it, and jerk it round,
Till the right end at last is found,
Then wind, and wind, and wind away,
And what was work is chang'd to play.

When I wrote the two first lines, I thought I had engaged in a hazardous enterprise; for thought I, should my poetical vein be as dry as my prosaic, I shall spoil the sheet, and send nothing at all; for I could on no account endure the thought of beginning again. But I think I have succeeded to admiration, and am willing to flatter myself that I have seen even a worse impromptu in the newspapers.

Though we live in a nook, and the world is quite unconscious that there are any such beings in it as ourselves, yet we are not unconcerned about what passes in it. The present awful crisis, big with the fate of England, engages much of our attention. The action is probably over by this time, and though we know it not, the grand question is decided, whether the war shall roar in our once peaceful fields, or whether we shall still only hear of it at a distance. I can compare the nation to no similitude more apt, than that of an ancient castle that had been for days assaulted by the battering ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression, but the continual repetition at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall, the next, and the next, and the next blow increased it. Another shock puts the

whole mass in motion, from the top to the foundation: it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular; till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. Every million that has been raised within the last century, has had an effect upon the constitution like that of a blow from the aforesaid ram upon the aforesaid wall. The impulse becomes more and more important, and the impression it makes is continually augmented; unless therefore something extraordinary intervenes to prevent it—you will find the consequence at the end of my simile.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

As I promised you verse, if you would send me a frank, I am not willing to return the cover without some, though I think I have already wearied you by the prolixity of my prose.*

I must refer you to those unaccountable gaddings and caprices of the human mind, for the cause of this production; for in general I believe there is no man who has less to do with the ladies' cheeks than I have. I suppose it would be best to antedate it, and to imagine that it was written twenty years ago, for my mind was never more in a trifling butterfly trim than when I composed it, even in the earliest parts of my life.

* Here followed his poem, the Lily and the Rose,

And what is worse than all this, I have translated it into Latin. But that some other time.

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

How apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question : you say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine: a mistake to which you must attribute my arrears, if indeed I owe you any, for I am not backward to write where the uppermost thought is welcome.

I am oblig'd to you for all the books you have occasionally furnished me with : I did not indeed read many of Johnson's Classics—those of established reputation are so fresh in my memory, though many years have interven'd since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again : and as to the minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at all—I tasted most of them, and did not like them—it is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet—I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his life seems to have undertaken that task, for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He

has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story with doubts about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and, under the erroneous influence of that thought, informed his reader that *Gotham*, *Independence*, and the *Times*, were catchpennies. *Gotham*, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains, as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance (and Dryden in his *Absalom* and *Achitophel* stands in need of the same indulgence) for an unwarrantable use of Scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. *Independence* is a most animated piece, full of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character which I think is the great peculiarity of this writer. And the *Times* (except that the subject is disgusting to the last degree) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part; but where shall we find in any of those authors who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously ventured upon, and so happily finished, the matter so compressed, and yet so clear, and the colouring so sparingly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer, which he lays to the charge of others. A proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that

he was qualified to do it by his own native powers, and his great superiority of genius. For he that wrote so much, and so fast, would through inadvertence and hurry unavoidably have departed from rules which he might have found in books, but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart-horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters, but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well-being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph.

“ *Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
Esse sinent—.*”

Yours,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I FIND the Register in all respects an entertaining medley, but especially in this, that it has brought to my view some long forgotten pieces of my own production. I mean by the way two or three. Those I have marked with my own initials, and you may be

sure I found them peculiarly agreeable, as they had not only the grace of being mine, but that of novelty likewise to recommend them. It is at least twenty years since I saw them. You I think was never a dabbler in rhyme. I have been one ever since I was fourteen years of age, when I began with translating an elegy of Tibullus. I have no more right to the name of a poet, than a maker of mouse-traps has to that of an engineer, but my little exploits in this way have at times amused me so much, that I have often wished myself a good one. Such a talent in verse as mine is like a child's rattle, very entertaining to the trifler that uses it, and very disagreeable to all beside. But it has served to rid me of some melancholy moments, for I only take it up as a gentleman performer does his fiddle. I have this peculiarity belonging to me as a rhymist, that though I am charmed to a great degree with my own work, while it is on the anvil, I can seldom bear to look at it when it is once finished. The more I contemplate it, the more it loses of its value, till I am at last disgusted with it. I then throw it by, take it up again perhaps ten years after, and am as much delighted with it as at the first.

Few people have the art of being agreeable when they talk of themselves; if you are not weary therefore you pay me a high compliment.

I dare say Miss S—— was much diverted with the conjecture of her friends. The true key to the pleasure she found at Olney was plain enough to be seen, but they chose to overlook it. She brought with her a disposition to be pleased, which whoever does

is sure to find a visit agreeable, because they make it so.

Yours,

W. C.*

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Olney, August 31, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I BEGAN to fear for your health, and every day said to myself—I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask him how he does—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think, good for little else.

Many thanks, my friend, for the names that you have sent me. The Bagots will make a most conspicuous figure among my subscribers, and I shall not I hope soon forget my obligations to them.

The unacquaintedness of modern ears with the divine harmony of Milton's numbers, and the principles upon which he constructed them, is the cause of the quarrel that they have with elisions in blank verse. But where is the remedy? In vain should you or I,

* This dateless letter, which is probably entitled to a very early place in this collection, was reserved to close the correspondence with Mr. Unwin, from the hope, that before the press advanced so far, the editor might recover those unknown verses of Cowper, to which the letter alludes, but all researches for this purpose have failed.

HAYLEY.

and a few hundreds more perhaps who have studied his versification, tell them of the superior majesty of it, and that for that majesty it is greatly indebted to those elisions. In their ears, they are discord and dissonance; they lengthen the line beyond its due limits, and are therefore not to be endured. There is a whimsical inconsistency in the judgment of modern readers in this particular. Ask them all round, whom do you account the best writer of blank verse? and they will reply to a man, Milton, to be sure; Milton, against the field! Yet if a writer of the present day should construct his numbers exactly upon Milton's plan, not one in fifty of these professed admirers of Milton would endure him. The case standing thus, what is to be done? An author must either be contented to give disgust to the generality, or he must humour them by sinning against his own judgment. This latter course, so far as elisions are concerned, I have adopted as essential to my success. In every other respect I give as much variety in my measure as I can, I believe I may say as in ten syllables it is possible to give, shifting perpetually the pause and cadence, and accounting myself happy that modern refinement has not yet enacted laws against this also. If it had, I protest to you I would have dropped my design of translating Homer entirely; and with what an indignant stateliness of reluctance I make them the concession that I have mentioned, Mrs. Uuwin can witness, who hears all my complaints upon the subject.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston.

Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country. The imprisonment that we have suffered here for so many winters, has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgment that you form of ——— a foreigner; but you may assure yourself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and has given me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire, rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu ! mon ami, yours faithfully,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786.

YOU have not heard I suppose that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger. Not figuratively foreshowing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves

nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again——*Hers* therefore is the damage. I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her. She has made a winterly summer a most delightful one, but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.*

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston Underwood, Nov. 17, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THERE are some things that do not actually shorten the life of man, yet seem to do so, and frequent removals from place to place are of that number. For my own part at least I am apt to think, if I had been more stationary, I should seem to myself to have lived longer. My many changes of habitation have divided my time into many short periods, and when I look back upon them they appear only as the stages in a day's journey, the first of which is at no very great distance from the last.

I lived longer at Olney than any where. There indeed I lived till mouldering walls and a tottering house warned me to depart. I have accordingly taken the hint, and two days since arrived, or rather

* In this interval, viz. on the 15th of the following month, the day on which he completed his fifty-fifth year (O. S.) Mr. Cowper removed to Weston Underwood.

took up my abode at Weston. You perhaps have never made the experiment, but I can assure you that the confusion which attends a transmigration of this kind is infinite, and has a terrible effect in deranging the intellects. I have been obliged to renounce my Homer on the occasion, and though not for many days, I yet feel as if study and meditation, so long my confirmed habits, were on a sudden become impracticable, and that I shall certainly find them so when I attempt them again. But in a scene so much quieter and pleasanter than that which I have just escaped from, in a house so much more commodious, and with furniture about me so much more to my taste, I shall hope to recover my literary tendency again, when once the bustle of the occasion shall have subsided.

How glad I should be to receive you under a roof, where you would find me so much more comfortably accommodated than at Olney! I know your warmth of heart toward me, and am sure that you would rejoice in my joy. At present indeed I have not had time for much self-gratulation, but have every reason to hope nevertheless that in due time I shall derive considerable advantage, both in health and spirits, from the alteration made in my *whereabout*.

I have now the twelfth book of the Iliad in hand, having settled the eleven first books finally, as I think, or nearly so. The winter is the time when I make the greatest riddance.

Adieu, my friend Walter. Let me hear from you, and

Believe me ever yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston Lodge, Nov. 26, 1786.

It is my birthday, my beloved Cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark, thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensate all the dreariness of the season, and whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. O! for you, my Cousin, to partake these comforts with us! I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London in the spring. Perhaps therefore by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house accordingly, since it has been occupied by us and our *meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner.

“ And may at length my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage !”

For if it is not an hermitage, at least it is a much better thing, and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bedchambers of convenient dimensions; in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week, they both went with me to the cliffs—a scene, my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer, and the clinging dirt of winter would destroy you. What is called the cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when I have travelled perhaps five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing-room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms, that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when lifting my eyes I saw two black genteel figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was

walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip-field to get at me. You see therefore, my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The verses of Cadwallader have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little Cousin* at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786.

I SENT you, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my experience has long since taught me, that this world is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent, as well as the more Christian course to possess the comforts that we find in it, as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that that God who gave them, may, when he pleases, take them away ;

* Lord Cowper.

and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect, or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life, when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when, if they are at any time useful, men become useful to their families, their friends, and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them awed by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being by his years in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent; by his literary proficiency too clever for a schoolboy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life of such a character, and with such connexions, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt, removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we cannot contemplate without astonishment, but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be revered in silence. It is well for his mother, that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual acquiescence in the dispensations of Providence, else I know that this stroke would have been heavier, after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well

may, great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin! The first man for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St. Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more.

W. C.

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ.

Weston Underwood, near Olney,

Dec. 9, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR,

WE have indeed suffered a great loss by the death of our friend Unwin; and the shock that attended it was the more severe, as till within a few hours of his decease there seemed to be no very alarming symptoms. All the account that we received from Mr. Henry Thornton, who acted like a true friend on the occasion, and with a tenderness toward all concerned, that does him great honour, encouraged our hopes of his recovery; and Mrs. Unwin herself found him on her arrival at Winchester so cheerful, and in appearance so likely to live, that her letter also seemed to promise us all that we could wish on the subject. But an unexpected turn in his distemper, which suddenly seized his bowels, dashed all our hopes, and deprived us almost immediately of a man whom we must ever regret. His mind having been from his infancy deeply

tinctured with religious sentiments, he was always impressed with a sense of the importance of the great change of all ; and on former occasions, when at any time he found himself indisposed, was consequently subject to distressing alarms and apprehensions. But in this last instance, his mind was from the first composed and easy ; his fears were taken away, and succeeded by such a resignation as warrants us in saying, " that God made all his bed in his sickness." I believe it is always thus, where the heart, though upright toward God, as Unwin's assuredly was, is yet troubled with the fear of death. When death indeed comes, he is either welcome, or at least has lost his sting.

I have known many such instances, and his mother, from the moment that she learned with what tranquillity he was favoured in his illness, for that very reason expected that it would be his last. Yet not with so much certainty, but that the favourable accounts of him at length, in a great measure, superseded that persuasion.

She begs me to assure you, my dear sir, how sensible she is, as well as myself, of the kindness of your inquiries. She suffers this stroke, not with more patience and submission than I expected, for I never knew her hurried by any affliction into the loss of either, but in appearance at least, and at present, with less injury to her health than I apprehended. She observed to me, after reading your kind letter, that though it was a proof of the greatness of her loss, it yet afforded her pleasure, though a melancholy one, to see how much her son had been loved and valued by such a person as yourself.

Mrs. Unwin wrote to her daughter-in-law, to invite her and the family hither, hoping that a change of scene, and a situation so pleasant as this, may be of service to her, but we have not yet received her answer. I have good hope however that, great as her affliction must be, she will yet be able to support it, for she well knows whither to resort for consolation.

The virtues and amiable qualities of our friends are the things for which we most wish to keep them, but they are on the other hand the very things, that in particular ought to reconcile us to their departure. We find ourselves sometimes connected with, and engaged in affection too, to a person of whose readiness and fitness for another life we cannot have the highest opinion. The death of such men has a bitterness in it, both to themselves and survivors, which, thank God ! is not to be found in the death of Unwin.

I know, my dear sir, how much you valued him, and I know also how much he valued you. With respect to him, all is well ; and of you, if I should survive you, which perhaps is not very probable, I shall say the same.

In the mean time, believe me with the warmest wishes for your health and happiness, and with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects,

Yours, my dear sir,

Most faithfully,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

I AM perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event, in the judgment that you form of poor Unwin's death, as it affects the interest of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man for the office within the circle of your connexions. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him; and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death seeing no doubt that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter viewed in this light seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as in a melancholy moment you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that were it not impossible on more accounts than one that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office; I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and a better state, that I believe them to have been both endowed with. In that case, I perhaps might die too, but if I should, it would not be on account of that connexion. Neither, my dear, had your interference in the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your

whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to-day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation.—Good night.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 9, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

WE had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find at least as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr. Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however, though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him. Regretted indeed, and always to be regretted by those who knew him, for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind:

Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great as (to compare metropolitan things with rural) from St. Giles's to Grosvenor-square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant; and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left, than by telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786.

YOUR welcome letter, my beloved cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetical laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard-working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless without it. Praise I find affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such at least is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week,

whether he will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business I can tell him; for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and enclosed, one to Henry Thornton, and one to Mr. Newton. Homer stands by me biting his thumbs, and swears that if I do not leave off directly, he will choak me with bristly Greek, that shall stick in my throat for ever.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 3, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You wish to hear from me at any calm interval of epic frenzy. An interval presents itself, but whether calm or not, is perhaps doubtful. Is it possible for a man to be calm, who for three weeks past has been perpetually occupied in slaughter: letting out one man's bowels, smiting another through the gullet, transfixing the liver of another, and lodging an arrow in the buttock of a fourth? Read the thirteenth book of the Iliad, and you will find such amusing incidents as these the subject of it, the sole subject. In order

to interest myself in it, and to catch the spirit of it, I had need discard all humanity. It is woful work; and were the best poet in the world to give us at this day such a list of killed and wounded, he would not escape universal censure, to the praise of a more enlightened age be it spoken. I have waded through much blood, and through much more I must wade before I shall have finished. I determine in the mean time to account it all very sublime, and for two reasons.—First, because all the learned think so, and secondly, because I am to translate it. But were I an indifferent by-stander perhaps I should venture to wish, that Homer had applied his wonderful powers to a less disgusting subject. He has in the *Odyssey*, and I long to get at it.

I have not the good fortune to meet with any of these fine things, that you say are printed in my praise. But I learn from certain advertisements in the *Morning Herald*, that I make a conspicuous figure in the entertainments of Free-Mason's Hall. I learn also that my volumes are out of print, and that a third edition is soon to be published. But if I am not gratified with the sight of odes composed to my honour and glory, I have at least been tickled with some *douceurs* of a very flattering nature by the post. A lady unknown addresses the best of men—an unknown gentleman has read my inimitable poems, and invites me to his seat in Hampshire—another incognito gives me hopes of a memorial in his garden, and a Welsh attorney sends me his verses to revise, and obligingly asks

“ Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,

“ Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?”

If you find me a little vain hereafter, my friend, you must excuse it in consideration of these powerful incentives, especially the latter ; for surely the poet who can charm an attorney, especially a Welsh one, must be at least an Orpheus, if not something greater.

Mrs. Unwin is as much delighted as myself with our present situation. But it is a sort of April-weather life that we lead in this world. A little sunshine is generally the prelude to a storm. Hardly had we begun to enjoy the change, when the death of her son cast a gloom upon every thing. He was a most exemplary man ; of your order ; learned, polite, and amiable. The father of lovely children, and the husband of a wife (very much like dear Mrs. Bagot) who adored him.

Adieu, my friend ! Your affectionate

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 8, 1787.

I HAVE had a little nervous fever lately, my dear, that has somewhat abridged my sleep ; and though I find myself better to-day than I have been since it seized me, yet I feel my head lightish, and not in the best order for writing. You will find me therefore perhaps not only less alert in my manner than I usually am when my spirits are good, but rather shorter. I will however proceed to scribble till I find that it fatigues me, and then will do as I know you would bid me do were you here, shut up my desk, and take a walk.

The good General tells me that in the eight first books which I have sent him, he still finds alterations and amendments necessary, of which I myself am equally persuaded ; and he asks my leave to lay them before an intimate friend of his, of whom he gives a character that bespeaks him highly deserving such a trust. To this I have no objection, desiring only to make the translation as perfect as I can make it. If God grant me life and health, I would spare no labour to secure that point. The general's letter is extremely kind, and both for matter and manner like all the rest of his dealings with his cousin the poet.

I had a letter also yesterday from Mr. Smith, member for Nottingham. Though we never saw each other, he writes to me in the most friendly terms, and interests himself much in my Homer, and in the success of my subscription. Speaking on this latter subject, he says that my poems are read by hundreds, who know nothing of my proposals, and makes no doubt that they would subscribe, if they did. I have myself always thought them imperfectly, or rather insufficiently announced.

I could pity the poor woman, who has been weak enough to claim my song. Such pilferings are sure to be detected. I wrote it, I know not how long, but I suppose four years ago. The Rose in question was a Rose given to Lady Austen by Mrs. Unwin, and the incident that suggested the subject occurred in the room in which you slept at the vicarage, which Lady Austen made her dining-room. Some time since, Mr. Bull going to London, I gave him a copy of it, which he undertook to convey to Nichols, the printer of the

Gentleman's Magazine. He showed it to a Mrs. C——, who begged to copy it, and promised to send it to the printer's by her servant. Three or four months afterwards, and when I had concluded it was lost, I saw it in the Gentleman's Magazine, with my signature, W. C. Poor Simpleton! She will find now perhaps that the Rose had a thorn, and that she has pricked her fingers with it. Adieu! my beloved cousin.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 18, 1787.

I HAVE been so much indisposed with the fever that I told you had seized me, my nights during the whole week may be said to have been almost sleepless. The consequence has been, that except the translation of about thirty lines at the conclusion of the thirteenth book, I have been forced to abandon Homer entirely. This was a sensible mortification to me, as you may suppose, and felt the more because, my spirits of course failing with my strength, I seemed to have peculiar need of my old amusement. It seemed hard therefore to be forced to resign it just when I wanted it most. But Homer's battles cannot be fought by a man who does not sleep well, and who has not some little degree of animation in the day time. Last night however, quite contrary to my expectations, the fever left me entirely, and I slept quietly, soundly, and long. If it please God that it return not, I shall soon find myself in a condition to proceed. I walk constantly, that is

to say, Mrs. Unwin and I together; for at these times I keep her continually employed, and never suffer her to be absent from me many minutes. She gives me all her time, and all her attention, and forgets that there is another object in the world.

Mrs. Carter thinks on the subject of dreams as every body else does, that is to say, according to her own experience. She has had no extraordinary ones, and therefore accounts them only the ordinary operations of the fancy. Mine are of a texture that will not suffer me to ascribe them to so inadequate a cause, or to any cause but the operation of an exterior agency. I have a mind, my dear, (and to you I will venture to boast of it) as free from superstition as any man living, neither do I give heed to dreams in general as predictive, though particular dreams I believe to be so. Some very sensible persons, and I suppose Mrs. Carter among them, will acknowledge that in old times God spoke by dreams, but affirm with much boldness that he has since ceased to do so. If you ask them why? They answer, because he has now revealed his will in the Scripture, and there is no longer any need that he should instruct or admonish us by dreams. I grant that with respect to doctrines and precepts he has left us in want of nothing; but has he thereby precluded himself in any of the operations of his Providence? Surely not. It is perfectly a different consideration; and the same need that there ever was of his interference in this way, there is still, and ever must be, while man continues blind and fallible, and a creature beset with dangers which he

can neither foresee nor obviate. His operations however of this kind are, I allow, very rare ; and as to the generality of dreams, they are made of such stuff, and are in themselves so insignificant, that though I believe them all to be the manufacture of others, not our own, I account it not a farthing-matter who manufactures them. So much for dreams !

My fever is not yet gone, but sometimes seems to leave me. It is altogether of the nervous kind, and attended, now and then, with much dejection.

A young gentleman called here yesterday, who came six miles out of his way to see me. He was on a journey to London from Glasgow, having just left the university there. He came I suppose partly to satisfy his own curiosity, but chiefly, as it seemed, to bring me the thanks of some of the Scotch professors for my two volumes. His name is Rose, an Englishman. Your spirits being good, you will derive more pleasure from this incident than I can at present, therefore I send it.

Adieu, very affectionately,

W. C.*

* The illness mentioned in this letter interrupted the writer's translation of Homer during eight months.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Wexon, July 24, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

THIS is the first time I have written these six months, and nothing but the constraint of obligation could induce me to write now. I cannot be so wanting to myself as not to endeavour at least to thank you both for the visits with which you have favoured me, and the poems that you sent me; in my present state of mind I taste nothing, nevertheless I read, partly from habit, and partly because it is the only thing that I am capable of.

I have therefore read Burns' poems, and have read them twice; and though they be written in a language that is new to me, and many of them on subjects much inferior to the author's ability, I think them on the whole a very extraordinary production. He is I believe the only poet these kingdoms have produced in the lower rank of life, since Shakespeare, (I should rather say since Prior) who need not be indebted for any part of his praise to a charitable consideration of his origin, and the disadvantages under which he has laboured. It will be pity if he should not hereafter divest himself of barbarism, and content himself with writing pure English, in which he appears perfectly qualified to excel. He who can command admiration, dishonours himself if he aims no higher than to raise a laugh.

I am, dear Sir, with my best wishes for your prosperity, and with Mrs. Unwin's respects,

Your obliged and affectionate humble servant.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 27, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE not yet taken up the pen again, except to write to you. The little taste that I have had of your company, and your kindness in finding me out, make me wish that we were nearer neighbours, and that there were not so great a disparity in our years. That is to say, not that you were older, but that I were younger. Could we have met in early life, I flatter myself that we might have been more intimate than now we are likely to be. But you shall not find me slow to cultivate such a measure of your regard, as your friends of your own age can spare me. When your route shall lie through this country, I shall hope that the same kindness which has prompted you twice to call on me, will prompt you again, and I shall be happy if, on a future occasion, I may be able to give you a more cheerful reception than can be expected from an invalide. My health and spirits are considerably improved, and I once more associate with my neighbours. My head however has been the worst part of me, and still continues so ; is subject to giddiness and pain, maladies very unfavourable to poetical employment ; but a preparation of the bark, which I take regularly, has so far been of service to me in those respects, as to encourage in me a hope that by perseverance in the use of it, I may possibly find myself qualified to resume the translation of Homer.

When I cannot walk, I read, and read perhaps more than is good for me. But I cannot be idle. The

only mercy that I show myself in this respect is, that I read nothing that requires much closeness of application. I lately finished the perusal of a book, which in former years I have more than once attacked, but never till now conquered; some other book always interfered, before I could finish it. The work I mean is Barclay's *Argenis*; and, if ever you allow yourself to read for mere amusement, I can recommend it to you (provided you have not already perused it) as the most amusing romance that ever was written. It is the only one indeed of an old date that I ever had the patience to go through with. It is interesting in a high degree; richer in incident than can be imagined, full of surprises, which the reader never forestalls, and yet free from all entanglement and confusion. The style too appears to me to be such as would not dishonour Tacitus himself.

Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country, through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine. But his uncouth dialect spoiled all; and before he had half read him through, he was quite *ram-fezled*.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Aug. 30, 1787.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

THOUGH it costs me something to write, it would cost me more to be silent. My intercourse with my neighbours being renewed, I can no longer seem to forget how many reasons there are, why you especially should not be neglected; no neighbour indeed, but the kindest of my friends, and ere long, I hope, an inmate.

My health and spirits seem to be mending daily. To what end I know not, neither will conjecture, but endeavour, as far as I can, to be content that they do so. I use exercise, and take the air in the park and wilderness. I read much, but as yet write not. Our friends at the Hall make themselves more and more amiable in our account, by treating us rather as old friends, than as friends newly acquired. There are few days in which we do not meet, and I am now almost as much at home in their house as in our own. Mr. Throckmorton, having long since put me in possession of all his ground, has now given me possession of his library: an acquisition of great value to me, who never have been able to live without books, since I first knew my letters, and who have no books of my own. By his means I have been so well supplied, that I have not yet even looked at the Lounger, for which however I do not forget that I am obliged to you. *His* turn comes next, and I shall probably begin him to-morrow.

Mr. George Throckmorton is at the Hall. I thought I had known these brothers long enough to have found out all their talents and accomplishments. But I was mistaken. The day before yesterday, after having walked with us, they *carried* us up to the library (a more accurate writer would have said, *conducted* us) and then they showed me the contents of an immense port-folio, the work of their own hands. It was furnished with drawings of the architectural kind, executed in a most masterly manner, and among others, contained outside and inside views of the Pantheon, I mean the Roman one. They were all, I believe, made at Rome. Some men may be estimated at a first interview, but the Throckmortons must be seen often, and known long, before one can understand all their value.

They often inquire after you, and ask me whether you visit Weston this autumn. I answer, yes, and I charge you, my dearest Cousin, to authenticate my information. Write to me, and tell us when we may expect to see you. We were disappointed that we had no letter from you this morning. You will find me coated and buttoned according to your recommendation.

I write but little, because writing is become new to me ; but I shall come on by degrees. Mrs. Unwin begs to be affectionately remembered to you. She is in tolerable health, which is the chief comfort here that I have to boast of.

Yours, my dearest Cousin, as ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 4, 1787.

MY DEAREST COZ,

COME when thou canst come, secure of being always welcome ! All that is here is thine, together with the hearts of those who dwell here. I am only sorry, that your journey hither is necessarily postponed beyond the time when I did hope to have seen you ; sorry too that my Uncle's infirmities are the occasion of it. But years *will* have their course, and their effect ; they are happiest, so far as this life is concerned, who like him escape those effects the longest, and who do not grow old before their time. Trouble and anguish do that for some, which only longevity does for others. A few months since I was older than your Father is now, and though I have lately recovered, as Falstaff says, *some smatch of my youth*, I have but little confidence, in truth none, in so flattering a change, but expect, *when I least expect it*, to wither again. The past is a pledge for the future.

Mr. G. is here, Mrs. Throckmorton's Uncle. He is lately arrived from Italy, where he has resided several years, and is so much the gentleman, that it is impossible to be more so. Sensible, polite, obliging ; slender in his figure, and in manners most engaging — every way worthy to be related to the Throckmortons.

I have read Savary's travels into Egypt ; *Memoirs du Baron de Tott* ; Fenn's original letters ; the letters of Frederick of Bohemia, and am now reading *Memoirs d'Henri de Lorraine, Duc de Guise*. I have

also read Barclay's *Argenis*, a Latin romance, and the best romance that ever was written. All these, together with Madan's letters to Priestley, and several pamphlets, within these two months. So I am a great reader.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 15, 1787.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

ON Monday last I was invited to meet your friend Miss J—— at the Hall, and there we found her. Her good nature, her humorous manner, and her good sense, are charming; insomuch that even I, who was never much addicted to speech-making, and who at present find myself particularly indisposed to it, could not help saying at parting, I am glad that I have seen you, and sorry that I have seen so little of you. We were sometimes many in company; on Thursday we were fifteen, but we had not altogether so much vivacity and cleverness as Miss J——, whose talent at mirth-making has this rare property to recommend it, that nobody suffers by it.

I am making a gravel walk for winter use, under a warm hedge in the orchard. It shall be furnished with a low seat for your accommodation, and if you do but like it I shall be satisfied. In wet weather, or rather after wet weather, when the street is dirty, it will suit you well, for lying on an easy declivity through its whole length, it must of course be immediately dry.

You are very much wished for by our friends at the Hall—how much by me I will not tell you till the second week in October.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Sept. 29, 1787.

MY DEAR COZ,

I THANK you for your political intelligence; retired as we are, and seemingly excluded from the world, we are not indifferent to what passes in it; on the contrary, the arrival of a news-paper, at the present juncture, never fails to furnish us with a theme for discussion, short indeed, but satisfactory, for we seldom differ in opinion.

I have received such an impression of the Turks from the memoirs of Baron de Tott, which I read lately, that I can hardly help presaging the conquest of that empire by the Russians. The disciples of Mahomet are such babies in modern tactics, and so enervated by the use of their favourite drug; so fatally secure in their predestinarian dream, and so prone to a spirit of mutiny against their leaders, that nothing less can be expected. In fact, they had not been their own masters at this day, had but the Russians known the weakness of their enemies half so well as they undoubtedly know it now. Add to this, that there is a popular prophecy current in both countries, that Turkey is one day to fall under the Russian sceptre. A prophecy which, from whatever authority it

be derived, as it will naturally encourage the Russians, and dispirit the Turks, in exact proportion to the degree of credit it has obtained on both sides, has a direct tendency to effect its own accomplishment. In the mean time, if I wish them conquered, it is only because I think it will be a blessing to them to be governed by any other hand than their own. For under Heaven has there never been a throne so execrably tyrannical as theirs. The heads of the innocent that have been cut off to gratify the humour or caprice of their tyrants, could they be all collected and discharged against the walls of their city, would not leave one stone on another.

O that you were here this beautiful day! It is too fine by half to be spent in London. I have a perpetual din in my head, and though I am not deaf, hear nothing aright, neither my own voice, nor that of others. I am under a tub, from which tub accept my best love,

Yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Oct. 19, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

A SUMMONS from Johnson, which I received yesterday, calls my attention once more to the business of translation. Before I begin I am willing to catch though but a short opportunity to acknowledge your last favour. The necessity of applying myself with all diligence to a long work, that has been but too long interrupted, will make my opportunities of writing rare in future.

Air and exercise are necessary to all men, but particularly so to the man whose mind labours; and to him who has been all his life accustomed to much of both, they are necessary in the extreme. My time, since we parted, has been devoted entirely to the recovery of health and strength for this service, and I am willing to hope with good effect. Ten months have passed since I discontinued my poetical efforts; I do not expect to find the same readiness as before, till exercise of the neglected faculty, such as it is, shall have restored it to me.

You find yourself, I hope, by this time as comfortably situated in your new abode, as in a new abode one can be. I enter perfectly into all your feelings on occasion of the change. A sensible mind cannot do violence even to a local attachment without much pain. When my Father died I was young, too young to have reflected much. He was Rector of Berkhamstead, and there I was born. It had never occurred to me, that a parson has no fee-simple in the house and glebe he occupies. There was neither tree, nor gate, nor stile, in all that country, to which I did not feel a relation, and the house itself I preferred to a palace. I was sent for from London to attend him in his last illness, and he died just before I arrived. Then, and not till then, I felt for the first time that I and my native place were disunited for ever. I sighed a long adieu to fields and woods, from which I once thought I should never be parted, and was at no time so sensible of their beauties, as just when I left them all behind me, to return no more.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 10, 1787.

THE Parliament, my dearest Cousin, prorogued continually, is a meteor dancing before my eyes, promising me my wish only to disappoint me, and none but the king and his ministers can tell when you and I shall come together. I hope however that the period, though so often postponed, is not far distant, and that once more I shall behold you, and experience your power to make winter gay and sprightly.

I have a kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible, if they could. In point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small of her age, but time I suppose, that spoils every thing, will make her also a cat. You will see her I hope before that melancholy period shall arrive, for no wisdom that she may gain by experience and reflection hereafter, will compensate the loss of her present hilarity. She is dressed in a tortoise-shell suit, and I know that you will delight in her.

Mrs. Throckmorton carries us to-morrow in her chaise to Chicheley. The event however must be supposed to depend on elements, at least on the state of the atmosphere, which is turbulent beyond measure. Yesterday it thundered, last night it lightened, and at three this morning I saw the sky as red as a city in flames could have made it. I have a leech in a bottle that foretells all these prodigies and convulsions

of nature. No, not as you will naturally conjecture by articulate utterance of oracular notices, but by a variety of gesticulations, which here I have not room to give an account of. Suffice it to say, that no change of weather surprises him, and that in point of the earliest and most accurate intelligence, he is worth all the barometers in the world. None of them all indeed can make the least pretence to foretell thunder—a species of capacity of which he has given the most unequivocal evidence. I gave but sixpence for him, which is a groat more than the market price, though he is in fact, or rather would be, if leeches were not found in every ditch, an invaluable acquisition.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Nov. 16, 1787.

I THANK you for the solicitude that you express on the subject of my present studies. The work is undoubtedly long and laborious, but it has an end, and proceeding leisurely, with a due attention to the use of air and exercise, it is possible that I may live to finish it. Assure yourself of one thing, that though to a by-stander it may seem an occupation surpassing the powers of a constitution never very athletic, and, at present, not a little the worse for wear, I can invent for myself no employment that does not exhaust my spirits more. I will not pretend to account for this, I will only say that it is not the language of predilection for a favourite amusement, but that the fact is really

so. I have even found that those plaything-avocations, which one may execute almost without any attention, fatigue me, and wear me away, while such as engage me much, and attach me closely, are rather serviceable to me than otherwise.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Nov. 27, 1787.

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest Cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity, because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my Uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us, or yourself, with a journey to Weston. Yourself I say, both because I know it will give you pleasure to see *Causidice mi** once more, especially in the comfortable abode where you have placed him, and because, after so long an imprisonment in London, you, who love the country, and have a taste for it, would of course be glad to return to it. For my own part, to me it is ever new, and though I have now been an inhabitant of this village a twelve-month, and have during the half of that time been at liberty to expatiate, and to make discoveries, I am daily finding out fresh scenes and walks, which you would never be satisfied with enjoying — some of them are unapproachable by you either on foot or in your carriage.

* The appellation which Sir Thomas Hesketh used to give him in jest, when he was of the Temple.

Had you twenty toes (whereas I suppose you have but ten) you could not reach them; and coach wheels have never been seen there since the flood. Before it indeed, (as Burnet says that the earth was then perfectly free from all inequalities in its surface) they might have been seen there every day. We have other walks both upon hill tops, and in vallies beneath, some of which by the help of your carriage, and many of them without its help, would be always at your command.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All-saints in Northampton; brother of Mr. C. the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You would do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one." To this I replied, "Mr. C. you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, C——, the statuary, who, every body knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose."—"Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him, but he is a gentleman of so much reading, that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too for the same reason. But on asking him whether he

had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be considerable, promised to supply him. The waggon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style. A fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one*, that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. M——. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V. I. Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than any body.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about sometime with the spoon, and then returned it to her saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Yours ever,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1787.

I AM glad, my dearest Coz, that my last letter proved so diverting. You may assure yourself of the literal truth of the whole narration, and that however dull, it was not in the least indebted to any embellishments of mine.

You say well, my dear, that in Mr. Throckmorton we have a peerless neighbour; we have so. In point of information upon all important subjects, in respect too of expression and address, and in short, every thing that enters into the idea of a gentleman, I have not found his equal, not often, any where. When I asked who in my judgment approaches nearest to him, in all his amiable qualities, and qualifications, I should certainly answer his brother George, who if he be not his exact counterpart, endued with precisely the same measure of the same accomplishments, is nevertheless deficient in none of them; and is of a character singularly agreeable, in respect of a certain manly, I had almost said, heroic frankness, with which his air strikes one almost immediately. So far as his opportunities have gone, he has ever been as friendly and obliging to us, as we could wish him, and were he lord of the Hall to morrow, would I dare say conduct himself toward us in such a manner, as to leave us as little sensible as possible of the removal of its present owners. But all this I say, my dear, merely for the sake of stating the matter as it is; not in order to obviate, or to prove the inexpediency of any future plans of

yours, concerning the place of our residence. Providence and time shape every thing; I should rather say Providence alone, for time has often no hand in the wonderful changes that we experience; they take place in a moment. It is not therefore worth while perhaps to consider much what we will, or will not do in years to come, concerning which all that I can say with certainty at present is, that those years will be to me the most welcome, in which I can see the most of you.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Dec. 6, 1787.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

A SHORT time since, by the help of Mrs. Throckmorton's chaise, Mrs. Unwin and I reached Chicheley. "Now," said I to Mrs. Chester, "I shall write boldly to your brother Walter, and will do it immediately. I have passed the gulf that parted us, and he will be glad to hear it." But let not the man who translates Homer be so presumptuous as to have a will of his own, or to promise any thing. A fortnight, I suppose, has elapsed since I paid this visit, and I am only now beginning to fulfil what I then undertook to accomplish without delay. The old Grecian must answer for it.

I spent my morning there so agreeably, that I have ever since regretted more sensibly, that there are five miles of a dirty country interposed between us. For the increase of my pleasure, I had the good fortune

to find your Brother the Bishop there. We had much talk about many things, but most, I believe, about Homer; and great satisfaction it gave me to find, that on the most important points of that subject his Lordship and I were exactly of one mind. In the course of our conversation he produced from his pocket-book a translation of the first ten or twelve lines of the Iliad, and in order to leave my judgment free, informed me kindly at the same time that they were not his own. I read them, and according to the best of my recollection of the original, found them well executed. The Bishop indeed acknowledged that they were not faultless, neither did I find them so. Had they been such, I should have felt their perfection as a discouragement hardly to be surmounted; for at that passage I have laboured more abundantly than at any other, and hitherto with the least success. I am convinced that Homer placed it at the threshold of his work as a scarecrow to all translators. Now, Walter, if thou knowest the author of this version, and it be not treason against thy Brother's confidence in thy secrecy, declare him to me. Had I been so happy as to have seen the Bishop again before he left this country, I should certainly have asked him the question, having a curiosity upon the matter that is extremely troublesome.

The awkward situation in which you found yourself on receiving a visit from an authoress, whose works, though presented to you long before, you had never read, made me laugh, and it was no sin against my friendship for you to do so. It was a ridiculous distress, and I can laugh at it even now. I hope she

catechised you well. How did you extricate yourself?—Now laugh at me. The clerk of the parish of All Saints, in the town of Northampton, having occasion for a poet, has appointed me to the office. I found myself obliged to comply. The bellman comes next, and then, I think, though even borne upon your swan's quill, I can soar no higher!

I am, my dear friend, faithfully yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Dec. 10, 1787.

I THANK you for the snip of cloth, commonly called a pattern. At present I have two coats, and but one back. If at any time hereafter I should find myself possessed of fewer coats, or more backs, it will be of use to me.

Even as you suspect, my dear, so it proved. The ball was prepared for, the ball was held, and the ball passed, and we had nothing to do with it. Mrs. Throckmorton, knowing our trim, did not give us the pain of an invitation, for a pain it would have been. And why? as Sternhold says,—because, as Hopkins answers, we must have refused it. But it fell out singularly enough, that this ball was held, of all days in the year, on my birth day—and so I told them—but not till it was all over.

Though I have thought proper never to take any notice of the arrival of my MSS. together with the *other good things* in the box, yet certain it is, that I

received them. I have furbished up the tenth book till it is as bright as silver, and am now occupied in bestowing the same labour upon the eleventh. The twelfth and thirteenth are in the hands of —, and the fourteenth and fifteenth are ready to succeed them. This notable job is the delight of my heart, and how sorry shall I be when it is ended.

The smith and the carpenter, my dear, are both in the room, hanging a bell; if I therefore make a thousand blunders, let the said intruders answer for them all.

I thank you, my dear, for your history of the G—s. What changes in that family! And how many thousand families have in the same time experienced changes as violent as theirs! The course of a rapid river is the justest of all emblems, to express the variableness of our scene below. Shakspeare says, none ever bathed himself twice in the same stream, and it is equally true that the world upon which we close our eyes at night is never the same with that on which we open them in the morning.

I do not always say, give my love to my Uncle, because he knows that I always love him. I do not always present Mrs. Unwin's love to you, partly for the same reason, (Deuce take the smith and the carpenter,) and partly because I forget it. But to present my own I forget never, for I always have to finish my letter, which I know not how to do, my dearest Cox, without telling you that I am

Ever yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Dec. 13, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

UNLESS my memory deceives me, I forewarned you that I should prove a very unpunctual correspondent. The work that lies before me engages unavoidably my whole attention. The length of it, the spirit of it, and the exactness that is requisite to its due performance, are so many most interesting subjects of consideration to me, who find that my best attempts are only introductory to others, and that what to day I suppose finished, to-morrow I must begin again. Thus it fares with a translator of Homer. To exhibit the majesty of such a poet in a modern language is a task that no man can estimate the difficulty of till he attempts it. To paraphrase him loosely, to hang him with trappings that do not belong to him, all this is comparatively easy. But to represent him with only his own ornaments, and still to preserve his dignity, is a labour that, if I hope in any measure to achieve it, I am sensible can only be achieved by the most assiduous, and most unremitting attention. Our studies, however different in themselves, in respect of the means by which they are to be successfully carried on, bear some resemblance to each other. A perseverance that nothing can discourage, a minuteness of observation that suffers nothing to escape, and a determination not to be seduced from the straight line that lies before us, by any images with which fancy may present us, are essentials that should be common to us both. There are perhaps few arduous undertakings,

that are not in fact more arduous than we at first supposed them. As we proceed, difficulties increase upon us, but our hopes gather strength also, and we conquer difficulties which, could we have foreseen them, we should never have had the boldness to encounter. May this be your experience, as I doubt not that it will. You possess by nature all that is necessary to success in the profession that you have chosen. What remains is in your own power. They say of poets, that they must be born such: so must mathematicians, so must great generals, and so must lawyers, and so indeed must men of all denominations, or it is not possible that they should excel. But with whatever faculties we are born, and to whatever studies our genius may direct us, studies they must still be. I am persuaded, that Milton did not write his *Paradise Lost*, nor Homer his *Iliad*, nor Newton his *Principia*, without immense labour. Nature gave them a bias to their respective pursuits, and that strong propensity, I suppose, is what we mean by genius. The rest they gave themselves. "Macte esto," therefore, have no fears for the issue!

I have had a second kind letter from your friend Mr. ———, which I have just answered. I must not find hope to see him here, at least I must not much expect it. He has a family that does not permit him to fly southward. I have also a notion, that we three could spend a few days comfortably together, especially in a country like this, abounding in scenes with which I am sure you would both be delighted. Having lived till lately at some distance from the spot that I now inhabit, and having never been master of

any sort of vehicle whatever, it is but just now that I begin myself to be acquainted with the beauties of our situation. To you I may hope, one time or other, to show them, and shall be happy to do it, when an opportunity offers.

Yours, most affectionately,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 1, 1788.

Now for another story almost incredible! A story that would be quite such, if it was not certain that you give me credit for any thing. I have read the poem for the sake of which you sent the paper, and was much entertained by it. You think it perhaps, as very well you may, the only piece of that kind that was ever produced. It is indeed original, for I dare say Mr. Merry never saw mine; but certainly it is not unique. For most true it is, my dear, that ten years since, having a letter to write to a friend of mine, to whom I could write any thing, I filled a whole sheet with a composition, both in measure and in manner precisely similar. I have in vain searched for it. It is either burnt or lost. Could I have found it, you would have had double postage to pay. For that one man in Italy, and another in England, who never saw each other, should stumble on a species of verse, in which no other man ever wrote (and I believe that to be the case) and upon a style and manner too, of which, I suppose, that neither of them had ever seen an example, appears to me so extraordinary a fact, that I must

have sent you mine, whatever it had cost you, and am really vexed that I cannot authenticate the story by producing a voucher. The measure I recollect to have been perfectly the same, and as to the manner I am equally sure of that, and from this circumstance, that Mrs. Unwin and I never laughed more at any production of mine, perhaps not even at John Gilpin. But for all this, my dear, you must, as I said, give me credit; for the thing itself is gone to that limbo of vanity, where alone, says Milton, things lost on Earth are to be met with. Said limbo is, as you know, in the moon, whither I could not at present convey myself without a good deal of difficulty and inconvenience.

This morning being the morning of new year's day, I sent to the Hall a copy of verses, addressed to Mrs. Throckmorton, entitled, the Wish, or the Poet's New Year's Gift. We dine there to-morrow, when, I suppose, I shall hear news of them. Their kindness is so great, and they seize with such eagerness every opportunity of doing all they think will please us, that I held myself almost in duty bound to treat them with this stroke of my profession.

The small pox has done, I believe, all that it has to do at Weston. Old folks, and even women with child, have been inoculated. We talk of our freedom, and some of us are free enough, but not the poor. Dependant as they are upon parish bounty, they are sometimes obliged to submit to impositions, which perhaps in France itself could hardly be paralleled. Can man or woman be said to be free, who is commanded to take a distemper, sometimes at least mortal,

and in circumstances most likely to make it so? No circumstance whatever was permitted to exempt the inhabitants of Weston. The old as well as the young, and the pregnant as well as they who had only themselves within them, have been inoculated. Were I asked who is the most arbitrary sovereign on earth? I should answer, neither the king of France, nor the grand signior, but an overseer of the poor in England.

I am as heretofore occupied with Homer: my present occupation is the revision of all I have done, viz. of the first fifteen books. I stand amazed at my own increasing dexterity in the business, being verily persuaded that, as far as I have gone, I have improved the work to double its former value.

That you may begin the new year and end it in all health and happiness, and many more when the present shall have been long an old one, is the ardent wish of Mrs. Unwin, and of yours, my dearest Coz, most cordially,

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 5, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I THANK you for your information concerning the author of the translation of those lines. Had a man of less note and ability than Lord Bagot produced it, I should have been discouraged. As it is, I comfort myself with the thought, that even he accounted it an achievement worthy of his powers, and that even he found it difficult. Though I never had the honour

to be known to his Lordship, I remember him well at Westminster, and the reputation in which he stood there. Since that time I have never seen him, except once, many years ago, in the House of Commons, when I heard him speak on the subject of a drainage bill better than any member there.

My first thirteen books have been criticised in London; have been by me accommodated to those criticisms, returned to London in their improved state, and sent back to Weston with an imprimatur. This would satisfy some poets less anxious than myself about what they expose in public; but it has not satisfied me. I am now revising them again by the light of my own critical taper, and make more alterations than at the first. But are they improvements? you will ask—Is not the spirit of the work endangered by all this attention to correctness? I think and hope that it is not. Being well aware of the possibility of such a catastrophe, I guard particularly against it. Where I find that a servile adherence to the original would render the passage less animated than it should be, I still, as at the first, allow myself a liberty. On all other occasions I prune with an unsparing hand, determined that there shall not be found in the whole translation an idea that is not Homer's. My ambition is to produce the closest copy possible, and at the same time as harmonious as I know how to make it. This being my object, you will no longer think, if indeed you have thought it at all, that I am unnecessarily and over much industrious. The original surpasses every thing; it is of an immense length, is composed in the best language ever used upon earth, and

deserves, indeed demands all the labour that any translator, be he who he may, can possibly bestow on it. Of this I am sure, and your brother the good bishop is of the same mind, that, at present, mere English readers know no more of Homer in reality, than if he had never been translated: That consideration indeed it was, which mainly induced me to the undertaking; and if after all, either through idleness, or dotage upon what I have already done, I leave it chargeable with the same incorrectness as my predecessors, or indeed with any other that I may be able to amend, I had better have amused myself otherwise. And you I know are of my opinion.

I send you the clerk's verses, of which I told you. They are very clerklike, as you will perceive. But plain truth in plain words seemed to me to be the ne plus ultra of composition on such an occasion. I might have attempted something very fine, but then the persons principally concerned, viz. my readers, would not have understood me. If it puts them in mind that they are mortal, its best end is answered.

My dear Walter, adieu! yours faithfully,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 19, 1788.

WHEN I have prose enough to fill my paper, which is always the case when I write to you, I cannot find in my heart to give a third part of it to verse. Yet this I must do, or I must make my packets more costly

than worshipful, by doubling the postage upon you, which I should hold to be unreasonable. See then the true reason why I did not send you that same scribblement till you desired it. The thought which naturally presents itself to me on all such occasions is this—Is not your cousin coming? Why are you impatient? Will it not be time enough to show her your fine things when she arrives?

Fine things indeed I have few. He who has Homer to transcribe may well be contented to do little else. As when an ass, being harnessed with ropes to a sand cart, drags with hanging ears his heavy burthen, neither filling the long echoing streets with his harmonious bray, nor throwing up his heels behind, frolicksome and airy, as asses less engaged are wont to do; so I, satisfied to find myself indispensably obliged to render into the best possible English metre eight and forty Greek books, of which the two finest poems in the world consist, account it quite sufficient, if I may at last achieve that labour; and seldom allow myself those pretty little vagaries, in which I should otherwise delight, and of which, if I should live long enough, I intend hereafter to enjoy my fill.

This is the reason, my dear Cousin, if I may be permitted to call you so in the same breath with which I have uttered this truly heroic comparison; this is the reason why I produce at present but few occasional poems, and the preceding reason is that which may account satisfactorily enough for my withholding the very few that I do produce. A thought sometimes strikes me before I rise; if it runs readily into verse, and I can finish it before breakfast, it is well; other-

wise it dies, and is forgotten ; for all the subsequent hours are devoted to Homer.

The day before yesterday, I saw for the first time Bunbury's new print, the Propagation of a Lie. Mr. Throckmorton sent it for the amusement of our party. Bunbury sells humour by the yard, and is, I suppose, the first vender of it who ever did so. He cannot therefore be said to have humour without measure (pardon a pun, my dear, from a man who has not made one before these forty years) though he may certainly be said to be immeasurably droll.

The original thought is good, and the exemplification of it, in those very expressive figures, admirable. A poem on the same subject, displaying all that is displayed in those attitudes, and in those features, (for faces they can hardly be called) would be most excellent. The affinity of the two arts, viz. verse and painting, has been observed ; possibly the happiest illustration of it would be found, if some poet would ally himself to some draftsman, as Bunbury, and undertake to write every thing he should draw. Then let a musician be admitted of the party. He should compose the said poem, adapting notes to it exactly accommodated to the theme ; so should the sister arts be proved to be indeed sisters, and the world die of laughing.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Jan. 30, 1788.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

It is a fortnight since I heard from you, that is to say, a week longer than you have accustomed me to wait for a letter. I do not forget that you have recommended it to me, on occasions somewhat similar, to banish all anxiety, and to ascribe your silence only to the interruptions of company. Good advice, my dear, but not easily taken by a man circumstanced as I am. I have learned in the school of adversity, a school from which I have no expectation that I shall ever be dismissed; to apprehend the worst, and have ever found it the only course in which I can indulge myself without the least danger of incurring a disappointment. This kind of experience, continued through many years, has given me such an habitual bias to the gloomy side of every thing, that I never have a moment's ease on any subject to which I am not indifferent. How then can I be easy, when I am left afloat upon a sea of endless conjectures, of which you furnish the occasion? Write I beseech you, and do not forget that I am now a battered actor upon this turbulent stage; that what little vigour of mind I ever had, of the self-supporting kind I mean, has long since been broken; and that though I can bear nothing well, yet any thing better than a state of ignorance concerning your welfare. I have spent hours in the night leaning upon my elbow and wondering what your silence means. I entreat you once more to

put an end to these speculations, which cost me more animal spirits than I can spare; if you cannot without great trouble to yourself, which in your situation may very possibly be the case, contrive opportunities of writing so frequently as usual, only say it, and I am content. I will wait, if you desire it, as long for every letter, but then let them arrive at the period once fixed, exactly at the time, for my patience will not hold out an hour beyond it.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 1, 1782.

PARDON me, my dearest Cousin, the mournful ditty that I sent you last. There are times when I see every thing through a medium that distresses me to an insupportable degree, and that letter was written in one of them. A fog that had for three days obliterated all the beauties of Weston, and a north-east wind, might possibly contribute not a little to the melancholy that indited it. But my mind is now easy, your letter has made it so, and I feel myself as blithe as a bird in comparison. I love you, my Cousin, and cannot suspect, either with or without cause, the least evil in which you may be concerned, without being greatly troubled! Oh trouble! the portion of all mortals—but mine in particular. Would I had never known thee, or could bid thee farewell for ever; for I meet thee at every turn, my pillows are stuffed with thee, my very roses smell of thee, and even my Cousin,

who would cure me of all trouble if she could, is sometimes innocently the cause of trouble to me.

I now see the unreasonableness of my late trouble, and would, if I could trust myself so far, promise never again to trouble either myself or you in the same manner, unless warranted by some more substantial ground of apprehension.

What I said concerning Homer, my dear, was spoken, or rather written, merely under the influence of a certain jocularly, that I felt at that moment. I am in reality so far from thinking myself an ass, and my translation a sand-cart, that I rather seem, in my own account of the matter, one of those flaming steeds harnessed to the chariot of Apollo, of which we read in the works of the ancients. I have lately, I know not how, acquired a certain superiority to myself in this business, and in this last revisal have elevated the expression to a degree far surpassing its former boast. A few evenings since I had an opportunity to try how far I might venture to expect such success of my labours as can alone repay them, by reading the first book of my Iliad to a friend of ours. He dined with you once at Olney. His name is Greatheed, a man of letters and of taste. He dined with us, and the evening proving dark and dirty, we persuaded him to take a bed. I entertained him as I tell you. He heard me with great attention, and with evident symptoms of the highest satisfaction, which, when I had finished the exhibition, he put out of all doubt by expressions which I cannot repeat. Only this he said to Mrs. Unwin while I was in another room, that he had never entered into the spirit of

Homer before, nor had any thing like a due conception of his manner. This I have said, knowing that it will please you, and will now say no more.

Adieu ! my dear, will you never speak of coming to Weston more ?

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Feb. 14, 1788.

DEAR SIR,

THOUGH it be long since I received your last, I have not yet forgotten the impression it made upon me, nor how sensibly I felt myself obliged by your unreserved and friendly communications. I will not apologize for my silence in the interim, because, apprised as you are of my present occupation, the excuse that I might allege will present itself to you of course, and to dilate upon it would therefore be waste of paper.

You are in possession of the best security imaginable for the due improvement of your time, which is a just sense of its value. Had I been, when at your age, as much affected by that important consideration as I am at present, I should not have devoted, as I did, all the earliest parts of my life to amusement only. I am now in the predicament into which the thoughtlessness of youth betrays nine-tenths of mankind, who never discover that the health and good spirits, which generally accompany it, are in reality blessings only according to the use we make of them,

till advanced years begin to threaten them with the loss of both. How much wiser would thousands have been, than now they ever will be, had a puny constitution, or some occasional infirmity, constrained them to devote those hours to study and reflection, which for want of some such check they have given entirely to dissipation! I, therefore, account you happy, who, young as you are, need not be informed that you cannot always be so; and who already know that the materials, upon which age can alone build its comfort, should be brought together at an earlier period. You have indeed, in losing a father, lost a friend, but you have not lost his instructions. His example was not buried with him, but happily for you (happily because you are desirous to avail yourself of it) still lives in your remembrance, and is cherished in your best affections.

Your last letter was dated from the house of a gentleman, who was, I believe, my schoolfellow. For the Mr. C——, who lived at Watford, while I had any connexion with Hertfordshire, must have been the father of the present, and according to his age, and the state of his health, when I saw him last, must have been long dead. I never was acquainted with the family further than by report, which always spoke honourably of them, though in all my journeys to and from my father's I must have passed the door. The circumstance however reminds me of the beautiful reflection of Glaucus in the sixth Iliad; beautiful as well for the affecting nature of the observation, as for the justness of the comparison, and the incomparable simplicity of the expression. I feel that I shall not be

satisfied without transcribing it, and yet perhaps *my* Greek may be difficult to decipher.

Οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοιήδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν.

Φύλλα τὰ μὲν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη

Τηλεδόωσα φύει, ἕαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρῃ

Ὡς ἀνδρῶν γενεή, ἡ μὲν φύει, ἡ δ' ἀπολήγῃ.

Excuse this piece of pedantry in a man whose Homer is always before him! What would I give that he were living now, and within my reach! I, of all men living, have the best excuse for indulging such a wish, unreasonable as it may seem, for I have no doubt that the fire of his eye, and the smile of his lips, would put me now and then in possession of his full meaning more effectually than any commentator. I return you many thanks for the elegies which you sent me, both which I think deserving of much commendation. I should requite you but ill by sending you my mortuary verses, neither at present can I prevail on myself to do it, having no frank, and being conscious that they are not worth carriage without one. I have one copy left, and that copy I will keep for you.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 16, 1788.

I HAVE now three letters of yours, my dearest Cousin, before me, all written in the space of a week, and must be indeed insensible of kindness, did I not feel yours on this occasion. I cannot describe to you, neither could you comprehend it if I should, the manner in

which my mind is sometimes impressed with melancholy on particular subjects. Your late silence was such a subject. I heard, saw, and felt, a thousand terrible things, which had no real existence, and was haunted by them night and day, till they at last extorted from me the doleful epistle, which I have since wished had been burned before I sent it. But the cloud has passed, and as far as you are concerned, my heart is once more at rest.

Before you gave me the hint, I had once or twice, as I lay on my bed, watching the break of day, ruminated on the subject which, in your last but one, you recommended to me.

Slavery, or a release from slavery, such as the poor negroes have endured, or perhaps both these topics together, appeared to me a theme so important at the present juncture, and at the same time so susceptible of poetical management, that I more than once perceived myself ready to start in that career, could I have allowed myself to desert Homer for so long a time as it would have cost me to do them justice.

While I was pondering these things, the public prints informed me that Miss More was on the point of publication, having actually finished what I had not yet begun.

The sight of her advertisement convinced me that my best course would be that to which I felt myself most inclined, to persevere, without turning aside to attend to any other call, however alluring, in the business I have in hand.

It occurred to me likewise, that I have already borne my testimony in favour of my black brethren ;

and that I was one of the earliest, if not the first, of those who have in the present day expressed their detestation of the diabolical traffic in question.

On all these accounts I judged it best to be silent, and especially because I cannot doubt that some effectual measures will now be taken to alleviate the miseries of their condition, the whole nation being in possession of the case, and it being impossible also to allege an argument in behalf of man-merchandise, that can deserve a hearing. I shall be glad to see Hannah More's poem; she is a favourite writer with me, and has more nerve and energy both in her thoughts and language than half the he rhymers in the kingdom. The Thoughts on the Manners of the Great will likewise be most acceptable. I want to learn as much of the world as I can, but to acquire that learning at a distance, and a book with such a title promises fair to serve the purpose effectually.

I recommend it to you, my dear, by all means to embrace the fair occasion, and to put yourself in the way of being squeezed and incommoded a few hours, for the sake of hearing and seeing what you will never have an opportunity to see and hear hereafter, the trial of a man who has been greater, and more feared than the great Mogul himself. Whatever we are at home, we certainly have been tyrants in the East; and if these men have, as they are charged, rioted in the miseries of the innocent, and dealt death to the guiltless, with an unsparing hand, may they receive a retribution that shall in future make all governors and judges of ours, in those distant regions, tremble. While I speak thus, I equally wish them acquitted.

They were both my schoolfellows, and for Hastings I had a particular value. Farewell.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, Feb. 22, 1788.

I DO not wonder that your ears and feelings were hurt by Mr. Burke's severe invective. But you are to know, my dear, or probably you know it already, that the prosecution of public delinquents has always, and in all countries, been thus conducted. The style of a criminal charge of this kind has been an affair settled among orators from the days of Tully to the present, and like all other practices that have obtained for ages, this in particular seems to have been founded originally in reason, and in the necessity of the case.

He who accuses another to the state, must not appear himself unmoved by the view of crimes with which he charges him, lest he should be suspected of fiction, or of precipitancy; or of a consciousness that after all he shall not be able to prove his allegations. On the contrary, in order to impress the minds of his hearers with a persuasion that he himself at least is convinced of the criminality of the prisoner, he must be vehement, energetic, rapid; must call him tyrant, and traitor, and every thing else that is odious, and all this to his face, because all this, bad as it is, is no more than he undertakes to prove in the sequel? and if he cannot prove it he must himself appear in a light very little more desirable, and at the best to have trifled with the tribunal to which he has summoned him,

Thus Tully, in the very first sentence of his oration against Catiline, calls him a monster; a manner of address in which he persisted till said monster, unable to support the fury of his accuser's eloquence any longer, rose from his seat, elbowed for himself a passage through the crowd, and at last burst from the senate house in an agony, as if the Furies themselves had followed him.

And now, my dear, though I have thus spoken, and have seemed to plead the cause of that species of eloquence which you, and every creature who has your sentiments must necessarily dislike, perhaps I am not altogether convinced of its propriety. Perhaps, at the bottom, I am much more of opinion that if the charge, unaccompanied by any inflammatory matter, and simply detailed, being once delivered into the court, and read aloud; the witnesses were immediately examined, and sentence pronounced according to the evidence; not only the process would be shortened, much time and much expense saved, but justice would have at least as fair play as now she has. Prejudice is of no use in weighing the question—guilty or not guilty—and the principal aim, end, and effect of such introductory harangues is to create as much prejudice as possible. When you and I therefore shall have the sole management of such a business entrusted to us, we will order it otherwise.

I was glad to learn from the papers that our Cousin Henry shone as he did in reading the charge. This must have given much pleasure to the General.

Thy ever affectionate,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 3, 1788.

ONE day last week, Mrs. Unwin and I, having taken our morning walk, and returning homeward through the wilderness, met the Throckmortons. A minute after we had met them, we heard the cry of hounds at no great distance, and mounting the broad stump of an elm, which had been felled, and by the aid of which we were enabled to look over the wall, we saw them. They were all at that time in our orchard; presently we heard a terrier, belonging to Mrs. Throckmorton, which you may remember by the name of Fury, yelping with much vehemence, and saw her running through the thickets within a few yards of us at her utmost speed, as if in pursuit of something which we doubted not was the fox. Before we could reach the other end of the wilderness, the hounds entered also; and when we arrived at the gate which opens into the grove, there we found the whole weary cavalcade assembled. The huntsman dismounting begged leave to follow his hounds on foot, for he was sure, he said, that they had killed him. A conclusion which I suppose he drew from their profound silence. He was accordingly admitted, and with a sagacity that would not have dishonoured the best hound in the world, pursuing precisely the same track which the fox and the dogs had taken, though he had never had a glimpse of either after their first entrance through the rails, arrived where he found the slaughtered prey.

He soon produced dead reynard, and rejoined us in the grove with all his dogs about him. Having an opportunity to see a ceremony, which I was pretty sure would never fall in my way again, I determined to stay, and to notice all that passed with the most minute attention. The huntsman having by the aid of a pitchfork lodged reynard on the arm of an elm, at the height of about nine feet from the ground, there left him for a considerable time. The gentlemen sat on their horses contemplating the fox, for which they had toiled so hard; and the hounds assembled at the foot of the tree, with faces not less expressive of the most rational delight, contemplated the same object. The huntsman remounted; cut off a foot, and threw it to the hounds—one of them swallowed it whole like a bolus. He then once more alighted, and drawing down the fox by the hinder legs, desired the people, who were by this time rather numerous, to open a lane for him to the right and left. He was instantly obeyed, when throwing the fox to the distance of some yards, and screaming like a fiend, “tear him to pieces”—at least six times repeatedly, he consigned him over absolutely to the pack, who in a few minutes devoured him completely. Thus, my dear, as Virgil says, what none of the gods could have ventured to promise me, time itself, pursuing its accustomed course, has of its own accord presented me with. I have been in at the death of a fox, and you now know as much of the matter as I, who am as well informed as any sportsman in England.

Yours,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 12, 1788.

SLAVERY, and the Manners of the Great, I have read. The former I admired, as I do all that Miss More writes, as well for energy of expression, as for the tendency of the design. I have never yet seen any production of her pen, that has not recommended itself by both these qualifications. There is likewise much good sense in her manner of treating every subject, and no mere poetic cant (which is the thing that I abhor,) in her manner of treating any. And this I say, not because you now know and visit her, but it has long been my avowed opinion of her works, which I have both spoken and written, as often as I have had occasion to mention them.

Mr. Wilberforce's little book (if he was the author of it) has also charmed me. It must, I should imagine, engage the notice of those to whom it is addressed. In that case one may say to them, either answer it, or be set down by it. They will do neither. They will approve, commend, and forget it. Such has been the fate of all exhortations to reform, whether in verse or prose, and however closely pressed upon the conscience, in all ages. Here and there a happy individual, to whom God gives grace and wisdom to profit by the admonition, is the better for it. But the aggregate body (as Gilbert Cooper used to call the multitude) remain, though with a very

good understanding of the matter, like horse and mule that have none.

We shall now soon lose our neighbours at the Hall. We shall truly miss them, and long for their return. Mr. Throckmorton said to me last night, with sparkling eyes, and a face expressive of the highest pleasure—"We compared you this morning with Pope; we read your fourth Iliad, and his, and I verily think we shall beat him. He has many superfluous lines, and does not interest one. When I read your translation, I am deeply affected. I see plainly your advantage, and am convinced that Pope spoiled all by attempting the work in rhyme." His brother George, who is my most active amanuensis, and who indeed first introduced the subject, seconded all he said. More would have passed, but Mrs. Throckmorton having seated herself at the harpsichord, and for my amusement merely, my attention was of course turned to her. The new vicar of Olney is arrived, and we have exchanged visits. He is a plain, sensible man, and pleases me much. A treasure for Olney, if Olney can understand his value.

W. C.

TO GENERAL COWPER.

Weston, 1798.

MY DEAR GENERAL,

A LETTER is not pleasant which excites curiosity, but does not gratify it. Such a letter was my last, the defects of which I therefore take the first opportunity to supply. When the condition of our negroes in the

VOL. II.

A A

islands was first presented to me as a subject for songs, I felt myself not at all allured to the undertaking : it seemed to offer only images of horror, which could by no means be accommodated to the style of that sort of composition. But having a desire to comply, if possible, with the request made to me, after turning the matter in my mind as many ways as I could, I, at last, as I told you, produced three, and that which appears to myself the best of those three, I have sent you. Of the other two, one is serious, in a strain of thought perhaps rather too serious, and I could not help it. The other, of which the slave-trader is himself the subject, is somewhat ludicrous. If I could think them worth your seeing, I would, as opportunity should occur, send them also. If this amuses you, I shall be glad *.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

March 19, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE spring is come, but not I suppose that spring which our poets have celebrated. So I judge at least by the extreme severity of the season, sunless skies and freezing blasts, surpassing all that we experienced in the depth of winter. How do you dispose of yourself in this howling month of March? As for me, I walk daily, be the weather what it may, take Bark, and write verses. By the aid of such means as these I

* The Morning Dream (see Poems, Vol. 2.) accompanied this Letter.

combat the north-east wind with some measure of success, and look forward, with the hope of enjoying it, to the warmth of summer.

Have you seen a little volume lately published, entitled *The Manners of the Great*? It is said to have been written by Mr. Wilberforce, but whether actually written by him or not, is undoubtedly the work of some man intimately acquainted with the subject, a gentleman, and a man of letters. If it makes the impression on those to whom it is addressed, that may be in some degree expected from his arguments, and from his manner of pressing them, it will be well. But you and I have lived long enough in the world to know, that the hope of a general reformation in any class of men whatever, or of women either, may easily be too sanguine.

I have now given the last revisal to as much of my translation as was ready for it, and do not know, that I shall bestow another single stroke of my pen on that part of it before I send it to the press. My business at present is with the sixteenth book, in which I have made some progress, but have not yet actually sent forth *Patroclus* to the battle. My first translation lies always before me; line by line I examine it as I proceed, and line by line reject it. I do not however hold myself altogether indebted to my critics for the better judgment, that I seem to exercise in this matter now than in the first instance. By long study of him, I am in fact become much more familiar with *Homer* than at any time heretofore, and have possessed myself of such a taste of his manner, as is not to be attained by mere cursory reading for amusement. But

alas! 'tis after all a mortifying consideration, that the majority of my judges hereafter will be no judges of this. *Græcum est, non potest legi*, is a motto, that would suit nine in ten of those who will give themselves airs about it, and pretend to like or to dislike. No matter. I know I shall please *you*, because I know *what* pleases you, and am sure that I have done it.

Adieu! my good friend,

Ever affectionately yours,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, March 29, 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I REJOICE that you have so successfully performed so long a journey without the aid of hoofs or wheels. I do not know that a journey on foot exposes a man to more disasters than a carriage or a horse; perhaps it may be the safer way of travelling, but the novelty of it impressed me with some anxiety on your account.

It seems almost incredible to myself, that my company should be at all desirable to you, or to any man. I know so little of the world as it goes at present, and labour generally under such a depression of spirits, especially at those times when I could wish to be most cheerful, that my own share in every conversation appears to me to be the most insipid thing imaginable. But you say you found it otherwise, and I will not for my own sake doubt your sincerity, *de gustibus non est disputandum*, and since such is yours, I shall leave

you in quiet possession of it, wishing indeed both its continuance and increase. I shall not find a properer place in which to say, accept of Mrs. Unwin's acknowledgements, as well as mine, for the kindness of your expressions on this subject, and be assured of an undissembling welcome at all times, when it shall suit you to give us your company at Weston. As to her, she is one of the sincerest of the human race, and if she receives you with the appearance of pleasure, it is because she feels it. Her behaviour on such occasions is with her an affair of conscience, and she dares no more look a falsehood than utter one.

It is almost time to tell you that I have received the books safe, they have not suffered the least detriment by the way, and I am much obliged to you for them. If my translation should be a little delayed in consequence of this favour of yours, you must take the blame on yourself. It is impossible not to read the notes of a commentator so learned, so judicious, and of so fine a taste as Dr. Clarke, having him at one's elbow. Though he has been but a few hours under my roof, I have already peeped at him, and find that he will be *instar omnium* to me. They are such notes exactly as I wanted. A translator of Homer should ever have somebody at hand to say, "that's a beauty," lest he should slumber where his author does not; not only depreciating, by such inadvertency, the work of his original, but depriving perhaps his own of an embellishment which wanted only to be noticed.

If you hear ballads sung in the streets on the hardships of the negroes in the islands, they are probably mine. It must be an honour to any man to have given

a stroke to that chain however feeble. I fear however that the attempt will fail. The tidings which have lately reached me from London concerning it, are not the most encouraging. While the matter slept, or was but slightly adverted to, the English only had their share of shame in common with other nations on account of it. But since it has been canvassed and searched to the bottom, since the public attention has been rivetted to the horrible scheme, we can no longer plead either that we did not know it, or did not think of it. Wo be to us, if we refuse the poor captives the redress to which they had so clear a right, and prove ourselves in the sight of God and men indifferent to all considerations but those of gain.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, March 31, 1793.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Mrs. Throckmorton has promised to write to me. I beg that as often as you shall see her you will give her a smart pinch, and say, "Have you written to my Cousin?" I build all my hopes of her performance on this expedient, and for so doing these my letters, not patent, shall be your sufficient warrant. You are thus to give her the question till she shall answer, "Yes." I have written one more song, and sent it. It is called the Morning Dream, and may be sung to the tune of Tweed-Side, or any other tune that will suit it, for I am not nice on that subject. I would have copied it

for you, had I not almost filled my sheet without it, but now, my dear, you must stay till the sweet sirens of London shall bring it to you, or if that happy day should never arrive, I hereby acknowledge myself your debtor to that amount. I shall now probably cease to sing of tortured negroes, a theme which never pleased me, but which, in the hope of doing them some little service, I was not unwilling to handle.

If any thing could have raised Miss More to a higher place in my opinion than she possessed before, it could only be your information that, after all, she, and not Mr. Wilberforce, is author of that volume. How comes it to pass, that she, being a woman, writes with a force, and energy, and a correctness hitherto arrogated by the men, and not very frequently displayed even by the men themselves!

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 6, 1798.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

YOU ask me how I like Smollet's Don Quixote? I answer, well, perhaps better than any body's. But having no skill in the original, some diffidence becomes me. That is to say, I do not know whether I ought to prefer it or not. Yet there is so little deviation from other versions of it which I have seen, that I do not much hesitate. It has made me laugh I know immoderately, and in such a case *ça suffit*.

A thousand thanks, my dear, for the new conveni-

ence: in the way of stowage which you are so kind as to intend me. There is nothing in which I am so deficient as repositories for letters, papers, and litter of all sorts. Your last present has helped me somewhat; but not with respect to such things as require lock and key, which are numerous. A box therefore so secured will be to me an invaluable acquisition. And since you leave me to my option, what shall be the size thereof, I of course prefer a folio. On the back of the book-seeming box some artist, expert in those matters, may inscribe these words,

Collectanea curiosa.

The English of which is, a collection of curiosities. A title which I prefer to all others, because if I live, I shall take care that the box shall merit it, and because it will operate as an incentive to open that, which being locked cannot be opened. For in these cases the greater the balk, the more wit is discovered by the ingenious contriver of it, viz. myself.

The General I understand by his last letter is in town. In my last to him, I told him news; possibly it will give you pleasure, and ought for that reason to be made known to you as soon as possible. My friend Rowley, who I told you has after twenty-five years silence renewed his correspondence with me, and who now lives in Ireland, where he has many and considerable connexions, has sent to me for thirty subscription papers. Rowley is one of the most benevolent and friendly creatures in the world, and will, I dare say, do all in his power to serve me.

I am just recovered from a violent cold, attended by

a cough, which split my head while it lasted. I escaped these tortures all the winter, but whose constitution, or what skin, can possibly be proof against our vernal breezes in England? Mine never were, nor will be.

When people are intimate, we say they are as great as two inkle-weavers, on which expression I have to remark in the first place, that the word *great* is here used in a sense which the corresponding term has not, so far as I know, in any other language—and secondly, that inkle-weavers contract intimacies with each other sooner than other people on account of their juxtaposition in weaving of inkle. Hence it is that Mr. Gregson and I emulate those happy weavers in the closeness of our connexion. We live near to each other, and while the Hall is empty are each others only extraforaneous comfort.

Most truly thine,

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, May 8, 1788.

ALAS! my library!—I must now give it up for a lost thing for ever. The only consolation belonging to the circumstance is, or seems to be, that no such loss did ever befall any other man, or can ever befall me again. As far as books are concerned I am

Totus teres atque rotundus,

and may set fortune at defiance. The books which

had been my father's had most of them his arms on the inside cover, but the rest no mark, neither his name nor mine. I could mourn for them like Sancho for his Dapple, but it would avail me nothing.

You will oblige me much by sending me Crazy Kate. A gentleman last winter promised me both her and the Lace-maker, but he went to London, that place in which, as in the grave, "all things are forgotten," and I have never seen either of them.

I begin to find some prospect of a conclusion, of the Iliad at least, now opening upon me, having reached the eighteenth book. Your letter found me yesterday in the very fact of dispersing the whole host of Troy by the voice only of Achilles. There is nothing extravagant in the idea, for you have witnessed a similar effect attending even such a voice as mine at midnight, from a garret window, on the dogs of a whole parish, whom I have put to flight in a moment.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 12, 1788.

It is probable, my dearest Coz, that I shall not be able to write much, but as much as I can I will. The time between rising and breakfast is all that I can at present find, and this morning I lay longer than usual.

In the style of the lady's note to you. I can easily perceive a smatch of her character. Neither men nor women write with such neatness of expression, who have not given a good deal of attention to language, and qualified themselves by study. At the same time it gave me much more pleasure to observe that my Coz, though not standing on the pinnacle of renown quite so elevated, as that which lifts Mrs. Montagu to the clouds, falls in no degree short of her in this particular; so that should she make you a member of her academy, she will do it honour. Suspect me not of flattering you, for I abhor the thought; neither *will* you suspect it. Recollect that it is an invariable rule with me, never to pay compliments to those I love.

Two days, *en suite*, I have walked to Gayhurst; a longer journey than I have walked on foot these seventeen years. The first day I went alone, designing merely to make the experiment, and choosing to be at liberty to return at whatsoever point of my pilgrimage I should find myself fatigued. For I was not without suspicion that years, and some other things no less injurious than years, viz. melancholy and distress of mind, might by this time have unfitted me for such achievements. But I found it otherwise. I reached the church, which stands, as you know, in the garden, in fifty-five minutes, and returned in ditto time to Weston. The next day I took the same walk with Mr. Powley, having a desire to show him the prettiest place in the country. I not only performed these two excursions without injury to my health, but have by means of them gained indisputable proof that my ambulatory faculty is not yet impaired; a discovery.

which, considering that to my feet alone I am likely, as I have ever been, to be indebted always for my transportation from place to place, I find very delectable.

You will find in the Gentleman's Magazine a sonnet, addressed to Henry Cowper, signed T. H. I am the writer of it. No creature knows this but yourself; you will make what use of the intelligence you shall see good.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

May 24, 1796.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

FOR two excellent prints I return you my sincere acknowledgments. I cannot say that poor Kate resembles much the original, who was neither so young nor so handsome as the pencil has represented her; but she was a figure well suited to the account given of her in the Task, and has a face exceedingly expressive of despairing melancholy. The lace-maker is accidentally a good likeness of a young woman, once our neighbour, who was hardly less handsome than the picture twenty years ago; but the loss of one husband, and the acquisition of another, have, since that time, impaired her much; yet she might still be supposed to have sat to the artist.

We dined yesterday with your friend and mine, the most companionable and domestic Mr. C——. The whole kingdom can hardly furnish a spectacle more pleasing to a man who has a taste for true happiness,

than himself, Mrs. C——, and their multitudinous family. Seven long miles are interposed between us, or perhaps I should oftener have an opportunity of declaiming on this subject.

I am now in the nineteenth book of the Iliad, and on the point of displaying such feats of heroism performed by Achilles, as make all other achievements trivial. I may well exclaim, O! for a muse of fire! especially having not only a great host to cope with, but a great river also; much however may be done, when Homer leads the way. I should not have chosen to have been the original author of such a business, even though all the nine had stood at my elbow. Time has wonderful effects. We admire that in an ancient, for which we should send a modern bard to Bedlam.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a great curiosity; an antique bust of Paris in Parian marble. You will conclude that it interested me exceedingly. I pleased myself with supposing that it once stood in Helen's chamber. It was in fact brought from the Levant, and though not well mended (for it had suffered much by time) is an admirable performance.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, May 27, 1788.

MY DEAR COZ,

THE General, in a letter which came yesterday, sent me enclosed a copy of my sonnet; thus introducing it.

"I send a copy of verses somebody has written in

VOL. II.

B B

the Gentleman's Magazine for April last. Independent of my partiality towards the subject, I think the lines themselves are good."

Thus it appears that my poetical adventure has succeeded to my wish, and I write to him by this post, on purpose to inform him that the somebody in question is myself.

I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned, and that every critic veils his bonnet to her superior judgment. I am now reading, and have reached the middle of her Essay on the Genius of Shakspeare, a book of which, strange as it may seem, though I must have read it formerly, I had absolutely forgot the existence.

The learning; the good sense, the sound judgment, and the wit displayed in it, fully justify not only my compliment, but all compliments that either have been already paid to her talents, or shall be paid hereafter. Voltaire, I doubt not, rejoiced that his antagonist wrote in English, and that his countrymen could not possibly be judges of the dispute. Could they have known how much she was in the right, and by how many thousand miles the bard of Avon is superior to all their dramatists, the French critic would have lost half his fame among them.

I saw at Mr. C——'s a head of Paris; an antique of Parian marble. His uncle, who left him the estate, brought it, as I understand, from the Levant: you may suppose I viewed it with all the enthusiasm that belongs to a translator of Homer. It is in reality a great curiosity, and highly valuable.

Our friend Sephus has sent me two prints, the Lace-

maker and Crazy Kate. These also I have contemplated with pleasure, having, as you know, a particular interest in them. The former of them is not more beautiful than a lace-maker, once our neighbour at Olney; though the artist has assembled as many charms in her countenance as I ever saw in any countenance, one excepted. Kate is both younger and handsomer than the original from which I drew, but she is in a good style, and as mad as need be.

How does this hot weather suit thee, my dear, in London? as for me, with all my colonnades and bowers, I am quite oppressed by it.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 3, 1788.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

THE excessive heat of these last few days was indeed oppressive; but excepting the languor that it occasioned both in my mind and body, it was far from being prejudicial to me. It opened ten thousand pores, by which as many mischiefs, the effects of long obstruction, began to breathe themselves forth abundantly. Then came an east wind, baneful to me at all times, but following so closely such a sultry season, uncommonly noxious. To speak in the seaman's phrase, not entirely strange to you, *I was taken all aback*; and the humours which would have escaped, if old Eurus would have given them leave, finding every door shut, have fallen into my eyes. But in a country like this, poor miserable mortals must be con-

tent to suffer all that sudden and violent changes can inflict; and if they are quit for about half the plagues that Caliban calls down on Prospero, they may say we are well off, and dance for joy, if the rheumatism or cramp will let them.

Did you ever see an advertisement by one Fowle, a dancing-master of Newport Pagnel? If not, I will contrive to send it to you for your amusement. It is the most extravagantly ludicrous affair of the kind I ever saw. The author of it had the good hap to be crazed, or he had never produced any thing half so clever; for you will ever observe, that they who are said to have lost their wits, have more than other people. It is therefore only a slander, with which envy prompts the malignity of persons in their senses to asperse wittier than themselves. But there are countries in the world, where the mad have justice done them, where they are revered as the subjects of inspiration, and consulted as oracles. Poor Fowle would have made a figure there.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston, June 8, 1783.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR letter brought me the very first intelligence of the event it mentions. My last letter from Lady Hesketh gave me reason enough to expect it, but the certainty of it was unknown to me till I learned it by your information. If gradual decline, the consequence of great age, be a sufficient preparation of the mind

to encounter such a loss, our minds were certainly prepared to meet it: yet to you I need not say that no preparation can supersede the feelings of the heart on such occasions. While our friends yet live inhabitants of the same world with ourselves, they seem still to live to *us*; we are sure that they sometimes think of us; and however improbable it may seem, it is never impossible that we may see each other once again. But the grave, like a great gulf, swallows all such expectation, and in the moment when a beloved friend sinks into it, a thousand tender recollections awaken a regret, that will be felt in spite of all reasonings, and let our warnings have been what they may. Thus it is I take my last leave of poor Ashley, whose heart towards me was ever truly parental, and to whose memory I owe a tenderness and respect that will never leave me.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 10, 1788.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

YOUR kind letter of precaution to Mr. Gregson sent him hither as soon as chapel-service was ended in the evening. But he found me already apprised of the event that occasioned it, by a line from Sephus, received a few hours before. My dear uncle's death awakened in me many reflections, which for a time sunk my spirits. A man like him would have been mourned, had he doubled the age he reached. At any age his death would have been felt as a loss, that

B B 2

no survivor could repair. And though it was not probable that for my own part I should ever see him more, yet the consciousness that he still lived, was a comfort to me. Let it comfort us now, that we have lost him only at a time when nature could afford him to us no longer; that as his life was blameless, so was his death without anguish; and that he is gone to Heaven. I know not, that human life, in its most prosperous state, can present any thing to our wishes half so desirable, as such a close of it.

Not to mingle this subject with others that would ill suit with it, I will add no more at present, than a warm hope, that you and your sister will be able effectually to avail yourselves of all the consolatory matter with which it abounds. You gave yourselves, while he lived, to a father, whose life was doubtless prolonged by your attentions, and whose tenderness of disposition made him always deeply sensible of your kindness in this respect, as well as in many others. His old age was the happiest that I have ever known, and I give you both joy of having had so fair an opportunity, and of having so well used it, to approve yourselves equal to the calls of such a duty in the sight of God and man.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 18, 1782.

ALTHOUGH I knew that you must be very much occupied on the present most affecting occasion, yet, not hearing from you, I began to be very uneasy on your

account, and to fear that your health might have suffered by the fatigue both of body and spirits, that you must have undergone, till a letter, that reached me yesterday from the General, set my heart at rest, so far as that cause of anxiety was in question. He speaks of my Uncle in the tenderest terms, such as show how truly sensible he was of the amiableness and excellence of his character, and how deeply he regrets his loss. We have indeed lost one, who has not left his like in the present generation of our family, and whose equal, in all respects, no future of it will probably produce. My memory retains so perfect an impression of him, that, had I been painter instead of poet, I could from those faithful traces have perpetuated his face and form with the most minute exactness: and this I the rather wonder at, because some, with whom I was equally conversant five and twenty years ago, have almost faded out of all recollection with me. But he made impression not soon to be effaced, and was in figure, in temper, and manner, and in numerous other respects, such as I shall never behold again. I often think what a joyful interview there has been between him and some of his contemporaries, who went before him. The truth of the matter is, my dear, that they are the happy ones, and that we shall never be such ourselves, till we have joined the party. Can there be any thing so worthy of our warmest wishes as to enter on an eternal, unchangeable state, in blessed fellowship and communion with those whose society we valued most, and for the best reasons, while they continued with us? A few steps more through a vain, foolish

world, and this happiness will be yours. But be not hasty, my dear, to accomplish thy journey! For of all that live, thou art one whom I can least spare; for thou also art one, who shalt not leave thy equal behind thee.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, June 17, 1788.

MY DEAR WALTER,

You think me, no doubt, a tardy correspondent, and such I am, but not willingly. Many hindrances have intervened, and the most difficult to surmount have been those which the east and north-east winds have occasioned, breathing winter upon the roses of June, and inflaming my eyes, ten times more sensible of the inconvenience than they. The vegetables of England seem, like our animals, of a hardier and bolder nature than those of other countries. In France and Italy flowers blow, because it is warm, but here, in spite of the cold. The season however is somewhat mended at present, and my eyes with it. Finding myself this morning in perfect ease of body, I seize the welcome opportunity to do something at least towards the discharge of my arrears to you.

I am glad that you liked my song, and, if I liked the others myself so well as that I sent you, I would transcribe for you them also. But I sent *that*, because I accounted it the best. Slavery, and especially negro-slavery, because the cruellest, is an odious and disgusting subject. Twice or thrice I have been as-

sailed with entreaties to write a poem on that theme. But besides that it would be in some sort treason against Homer to abandon him for other matter, I felt myself so much hurt in my spirits the moment I entered on the contemplation of it, that I have at last determined absolutely to have nothing more to do with it. There are some scenes of horror, on which my imagination can dwell, not without some complacence. But then they are such scenes as God not man produces. In earthquakes, high winds, tempestuous seas, there is the grand as well as the terrible. But when man is active to disturb, there is such meanness in the design, and such cruelty in the execution, that I both hate and despise the whole operation, and feel it a degradation of poetry to employ her in the description of it. I hope also that the generality of my countrymen have more generosity in their nature than to want the fiddle of verse to go before them in the performance of an act, to which they are invited by the loudest calls of humanity.

Breakfast calls, and then Homer.

Ever yours,

W. C.

Erratum.—Instead of Mr. Wilberforce as author of *Manners of the Great*, read *Hannah More*.

My paper mourns, and my seal. It is for the death of a venerable uncle, Ashley Cowper, at the age of eighty-seven.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, June 23, 1782.

WHEN I tell you that an unanswered letter troubles my conscience in some degree like a crime, you will think me endued with most heroic patience, who have so long submitted to that trouble on account of yours not answered yet. But the truth is, that I have been much engaged. Homer (you know) affords me constant employment; besides which I have rather what may be called, considering the privacy in which I have long lived, a numerous correspondence: to one of my friends in particular, a near and much-loved relation, I write weekly, and sometimes twice in the week; nor are these my only excuses; the sudden changes of the weather have much affected me, and especially with a disorder most unfavourable to letter-writing, an inflammation in my eyes. With all these apologies I approach you once more, not altogether despairing of forgiveness.

It has pleased God to give us rain, without which this part of our country at least must soon have become a desert. The meadows have been parched to a January brown, and we have foddered our cattle for some time, as in the winter. The goodness and power of God are never (I believe) so universally acknowledged as at the end of a long drought. Man is naturally a self-sufficient animal, and in all concerns that seem to lie within the sphere of his own ability, thinks little or not at all of the need he always has of protection and furtherance from above. But he is sensible

that the clouds will not assemble at his bidding, and that, though the clouds assemble, they will not fall in showers because he commands them. When therefore at last the blessing descends, you shall hear even in the streets the most irreligious and thoughtless with one voice exclaim—"Thank God!"—confessing themselves indebted to his favour, and willing, at least so far as words go, to give him the glory. I can hardly doubt therefore that the earth is sometimes parched, and the crops endangered, in order that the multitude may not want a memento to whom they owe them, nor absolutely forget the power on which all depend for all things.

Our solitary part of the year is over. Mrs. Unwin's daughter and son-in-law have lately spent some time with us. We shall shortly receive from London our old friends the Newtons (he was once minister of Olney); and, when they leave us, we expect that Lady Hesketh will succeed them, perhaps to spend the summer here, and possibly the winter also. The summer indeed is leaving us at a rapid rate; as do all the seasons, and though I have marked their flight so often, I know not which is the swiftest. Man is never so deluded as when he dreams of his own duration. The answer of the old Patriarch to Pharaoh may be adopted by every man at the close of the longest life—"Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." Whether we look back from fifty, or from twice fifty, the past appears equally a dream; and we can only be said truly to have lived, while we have been profitably employed. Alas, then! making the necessary deductions, how short is life! Were men in

general to save themselves all the steps they take to no purpose, or to a bad one, what numbers, who are now active, would become sedentary!

Thus I have sermonized through my paper. Living where you live, you can bear with me the better. I always follow the leading of my unconstrained thoughts, when I write to a friend, be they grave or otherwise. Homer reminds me of you every day. I am now in the twenty-first Iliad.

Adieu,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, June 27, 1788.

FOR the sake of a longer visit, my dearest Coz, I can be well content to wait. The country, this country at least, is pleasant at all times, and when winter is come, or near at hand, we shall have the better chance for being snug. I know your passion for retirement indeed, or for what we call *deady* retirement, and the F——s intending to return to Bath with their mother, when her visit at the Hall is over, you will then find here exactly the retirement in question. I have made in the orchard the best winter-walk in all the parish, sheltered from the east, and from the north-east, and open to the sun, except at his rising, all the day. Then we will have Homer and Don Quixote: and then we will have saunter and chat, and one laugh more before we die. Our orchard is alive with creatures of all kinds; poultry of every denomination swarms in it, and pigs, the drollest in the world!

I rejoice that we have a cousin Charles also, as well as a cousin Henry, who has had the address to win the good-likings of the Chancellor. May he fare the better for it! As to myself, I have long since ceased to have any expectations from that quarter. Yet, if he were indeed mortified as you say (and no doubt you have particular reasons for thinking so), and repented to that degree of his hasty exertions in favour of the present occupant, who can tell? he wants neither means nor management, but can easily at some future period redress the evil, if he chooses to do it. But in the mean time life steals away, and shortly neither he will be in circumstances to do me a kindness, nor I to receive one at his hands. Let him make haste therefore, or he will die a promise in my debt, which he will never be able to perform. Your communications on this subject are as safe as you can wish them. We divulge nothing but what might appear in the magazine, nor that without great consideration.

I must tell you a feat of my dog Beau. Walking by the river-side, I observed some water-lilies floating at a little distance from the bank. They are a large white flower, with an orange coloured eye, very beautiful. I had a desire to gather one, and, having your long cane in my hand, by the help of it endeavoured to bring one of them within my reach. But the attempt proved vain, and I walked forward. Beau had all the while observed me very attentively. Returning soon after toward the same place, I observed him plunge into the river, while I was about forty yards distant from him; and, when I had nearly reached the

spot, he swam to land with a lily in his mouth, which he came and laid at my foot.

Mr. Rose, whom I have mentioned to you as a visitor of mine for the first time soon after you left us, writes me word that he has seen my ballads against the slave-mongers; but not in print. Where he met with them, I know not. Mr. Bull begged hard for leave to print them at Newport-Pagnel, and I refused, thinking that it would be wrong to anticipate the nobility, gentry, and others, at whose pressing instance I composed them, in their design to print them. But perhaps I need not have been so squeamish; for the opportunity to publish them in London seems now not only ripe, but rotten. I am well content. There is but one of them with which I am myself satisfied, though I have heard them all well spoken of. But there are very few things of my own composition, that I can endure to read, when they have been written a month, though at first they seem to me to be all perfection.

Mrs. Unwin, who has been much the happier since the time of your return hither has been in some sort settled, begs me to make her kindest remembrance. Yours, my dear, most truly.

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, July 28, 1788.

It is in vain that you tell me you have no talent at description, while in fact you describe better than any body. You have given me a most complete idea of

your mansion and its situation; and I doubt not that with your letter in my hand by way of map, could I be set down on the spot in a moment, I should find myself qualified to take my walks and my pastime in whatever quarter of your paradise it should please me the most to visit. We also, as you know, have scenes at Weston worthy of description; but because you know them well, I will only say that one of them has, within these few days, been much improved; I mean the lime walk. By the help of the axe and the wood-bill, which have of late been constantly employed in cutting out all straggling branches that intercepted the arch, Mr. Throckmorton has now defined it with such exactness, that no cathedral in the world can show one of more magnificence or beauty. I bless myself that I live so near it; for were it distant several miles, it would be well worth while to visit it, merely as an object of taste; not to mention the refreshment of such a gloom both to the eyes and spirits. And these are the things which our modern improvers of parks and pleasure grounds have displaced without mercy; because, forsooth, they are rectilinear. It is a wonder they do not quarrel with the sunbeams for the same reason.

Have you seen the account of five hundred celebrated authors now living? I am one of them; but stand charged with the high crime and misdemeanor of totally neglected method; an accusation which, if the gentleman would take the pains to read me, he would find sufficiently refuted. I am conscious at least myself of having laboured much in the arrangement of my matter, and of having given to the several parts of my book of the Task, as well as to each poem in the

first volume, that sort of slight connection, which poetry demands ; for in poetry, (except professedly of the didactic kind) a logical precision would be stiff, pedantic, and ridiculous. But there is no pleasing some critics ; the comfort is, that I am contented, whether they be pleased or not. At the same time, to my honour be it spoken, the chronicler of us five hundred prodigies bestows on me, for aught I know, more commendations than on any other of my confraternity. May he live to write the histories of as many thousand poets, and find me the very best among them ! Amen !

I join with you, my dearest Coz, in wishing that I owned the fee simple of all the beautiful scenes around you, but such emoluments were never designed for poets. Am I not happier than ever poet was, in having thee for my cousin, and in the expectation of thy arrival here whenever Strawberry-hill shall lose thee ?

Ever thine,

W. C.

TO LADY HESKETH.

The Lodge, August 9, 1788.

THE Newtons are still here, and continue with us I believe until the 15th of the month. Here is also my friend, Mr. Rose, a valuable young man, who, attracted by the effluvia of my genius, found me out in my retirement last January twelvemonth. I have not permitted him to be idle, but have made him transcribe for me the twelfth book of the Iliad. He brings me the compliments of several of the literati, with whom he is acquainted in town, and tells me, that from Dr. Maclain, whom he saw lately, he learns that my book

is in the hands of sixty different persons at the Hague, who are all enchanted with it, not forgetting the said Dr. Maclain himself, who tells him that he reads it every day, and is always the better for it. O rare we!

I have been employed this morning in composing a Latin motto for the king's clock; the embellishments of which are by Mr. Bacon. That gentleman breakfasted with us on Wednesday, having come thirty-seven miles out of his way on purpose to see your cousin. At his request I have done it, and have made two: he will choose that which liketh him best. Mr. Bacon is a most excellent man, and a most agreeable companion: I would that he lived not so remote, or that he had more opportunity of travelling.

There is not, so far as I know, a syllable of the rhyming correspondence between me and my poor brother left, save and except the six lines of it quoted in yours. I *had* the whole of it, but it perished in the wreck of a thousand other things, when I left the Temple.

Breakfast calls. Adieu!

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Aug. 18, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I LEFT you with a sensible regret, alleviated only by the consideration that I shall see you again in October. I was under some concern also, lest, not being able to give you any certain directions myself, nor knowing where you might find a guide, you should wander and fatigue yourself, good walker as you are, before you

c c 2

could reach Northampton. Perhaps you heard me whistle just after our separation; it was to call back Beau, who was running after you with all speed, to intreat you to return with me. For my part, I took my own time to return, and did not reach home till after one; and then so weary, that I was glad of my great chair, to the comforts of which I added a crust and a glass of rum and water, not without great occasion. Such a foot-traveller am I.

I am writing on Monday, but whether I shall finish my letter this morning depends on Mrs. Unwin's coming sooner or later down to breakfast. Something tells me that you set off to-day for Birmingham; and though it be a sort of Iricism to say here, I beseech you take care of yourself, for the day threatens great heat, I cannot help it; the weather may be cold enough at the time when that good advice shall reach you; but be it hot, or be it cold, to a man who travels as you travel, take care of yourself, can never be an unseasonable caution. I am sometimes distressed on this account; for though you are young, and well made for such exploits, those very circumstances are more likely than any thing to betray you into danger.

Consule quid valeant PLANTÆ, quid ferre recusent.

The Newtons left us on Friday. We frequently talked about you after your departure, and every thing that was spoken was to your advantage. I know they will be glad to see you in London, and perhaps when your summer and autumn rambles are over, you will afford them that pleasure. The Throckmortons are equally well disposed to you, and them also I recommend to you as a valuable connection, the rather because you can only cultivate it at Weston.

I have not been idle since you went, having not only laboured as usual at the Iliad, but composed a *spick* and *span* new piece, called "The Dog and the Water Lily," which you shall see when we meet again. I believe I related to you the incident which is the subject of it. I have also read most of Lavater's Aphorisms; they appear to me some of them wise, many of them whimsical, a few of them false, and not a few of them extravagant. *Nil illi medium*. If he finds in a man the feature or quality that he approves, he deifies him; if the contrary, he is a devil. His verdict is in neither case, I suppose, a just one.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 11, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

SINCE your departure I have twice visited the oak, and with an intention to push my inquiries a mile beyond it, where it seems I should have found another oak, much larger, and much more respectable than the former; but once I was hindered by the rain, and once by the sultriness of the day. This latter oak has been known by the name of Judith many ages, and is said to have been an oak at the time of the Conquest. If I have not an opportunity to reach it before your arrival here, we will attempt that exploit together; and even if I should have been able to visit it ere you come, I shall yet be glad to do so; for the pleasure of extraordinary sights, like all other pleasures, is doubled by the participation of a friend.

You wish for a copy of my little dog's eulogium, which I will therefore transcribe ; but by so doing, I shall leave myself but scanty room for prose.

I shall be sorry if our neighbours at the hall should have left it, when we have the pleasure of seeing you. I want you to see them soon again, that a little *consuetudo* may wear off restraint ; and you may be able to improve the advantage you have already gained in that quarter. I pitied you for the fears which deprived you of your uncle's company, and the more having suffered so much by those fears myself. Fight against that vicious fear, for such it is, as strenuously as you can. It is the worst enemy that can attack a man destined to the forum—it ruined me. To associate as much as possible with the most respectable company, for good sense and good breeding, is, I believe, the only, at least I am sure it is the best remedy. The society of men of pleasure will not cure it, but rather leaves us more exposed to its influence in company of better persons.

Now for the Dog and the Water Lily*.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Sept. 25, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Say what is the thing by my Riddle design'd
Which you carried to London, and yet left behind.

I EXPECT your answer and without a fee.—The half hour next before breakfast I devote to you. The mo-

* Cowper's Poems, vol. i.

ment Mrs. Unwin arrives in the study, be what I have written much or little, I shall make my bow, and take leave. If you live to be a judge, as if I augur right you will, I shall expect to hear of a walking circuit.

I was shocked at what you tell me of —. Superior talents, it seems, give no security for propriety of conduct; on the contrary, having a natural tendency to nourish pride, they often betray the possessor into such mistakes, as men more moderately gifted never commit. Ability therefore is not wisdom, and an ounce of grace is a better guard against gross absurdity than the brightest talents in the world.

I rejoice that you are prepared for transcript work : here will be plenty for you. The day on which you shall receive this, I beg you will remember to drink one glass at least to the success of the Iliad, which I finished the day before yesterday, and yesterday began the Odyssey. It will be some time before I shall perceive myself travelling in another road; the objects around me are at present so much the same; Olympus, and a council of Gods' meet me at my first entrance. To tell you the truth, I am weary of heroes and deities, and, with reverence be it spoken, shall be glad, for variety's sake, to exchange their company for that of a Cyclops.

Weston has not been without its tragedies since you left us; Mrs. Throckmorton's piping bull-finch has been eaten by a rat, and the villain left nothing but poor Bully's beak behind him. It will be a wonder if this event does not at some convenient time employ my versifying passion. Did ever fair lady, from the

Lesbia of Catullus to the present day, lose her bird
and find no poet to commemorate the loss ?

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

Weston, Nov. 30, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR letter, accompanying the books with which you have favoured me, and for which I return you a thousand thanks, did not arrive till yesterday. I shall have great pleasure in taking now and then a peep at my old friend Vincent Bourne ; the neatest of all men in his versification, though when I was under his ushership, at Westminster, the most slovenly in his person. He was so inattentive to his boys, and so indifferent whether they brought him good or bad exercises, or none at all, that he seemed determined, as he was the best, so to be the last Latin poet of the Westminster line ; a plot which, I believe, he executed very successfully ; for I have not heard of any who has at all deserved to be compared with him.

We have had hardly any rain or snow since you left us ; the roads are accordingly as dry as in the middle of summer, and the opportunity of walking much more favourable. We have no season in my mind so pleasant as such a winter : and I account it particularly fortunate that such it proves, my cousin being with us. She is in good health, and cheerful, so are we all ; and this I say, knowing you will be glad to hear it, for you have seen the time when this could not be

said of all your friends at Weston. We shall rejoice to see you here at Christmas ; but I recollected when I hinted such an excursion by word of mouth, you gave me no great encouragement to expect you. Minds alter, and yours may be of the number of those that do so ; and if it should, you will be entirely welcome to us all. Were there no other reason for your coming than merely the pleasure it will afford to us, that reason alone would be sufficient ; but after so many toils, and with so many more in prospect, it seems essential to your well-being that you should allow yourself a respite, which perhaps you can take as comfortably (I am sure as quietly) here as any where.

The ladies beg to be remembered to you with all possible esteem and regard ; they are just come down to breakfast, and being at this moment extremely talkative, oblige me to put an end to my letter. Adieu.

W. C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Weston-Underwood, Dec. 2, 1788.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I TOLD you lately that I had an ambition to introduce to your acquaintance my valuable friend, Mr. Rose. He is now before you. You will find him a person of genteel manners and agreeable conversation. As to his other virtues and good qualities, which are many, and such as are not often found in men of his years, I consign them over to your own discernment, perfectly sure that none of them will escape

you. I give you joy of each other, and remain, my dear old friend, most truly yours,

W. C.

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ.

Weston-Underwood, Dec. 20, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR,

MRS. UNWIN is in tolerable health, and adds her warmest thanks to mine for your favour, and for your obliging inquiries. My own health is better than it has been many years. Long time I had a stomach that would digest nothing, and now nothing disagrees with it; an amendment for which I am, under God, indebted to the daily use of soluble tartar, which I have never omitted these two years. I am still, as you may suppose, occupied in my long labour. The *Iliad* has nearly received its last polish. And I have advanced in a rough copy as far as to the ninth book of the *Odyssey*. My friends are some of them in haste to see the work printed, and my answer to them is—"I do nothing else, and this I do day and night—it must in time be finished."

My thoughts, however, are not engaged to Homer only. I cannot be so much a poet as not to feel greatly for the King, the Queen, and the country. My speculations on these subjects are indeed melancholy, for no such tragedy has befallen in my day. We are forbidden to trust in man; I will not therefore say I trust in Mr. Pitt;—but in his counsels, under the blessing of Providence, the remedy is, I be-

lieve, to be found, if a remedy there be. His integrity, firmness, and sagacity, are the only human means that seem adequate to the great emergence.

You say nothing of your own health, of which I should have been happy to have heard favourably. May you long enjoy the best. Neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself have a sincerer, or a warmer wish, than for your felicity.

I am, my dear sir,

Your most obliged and affectionate,

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Jan. 10, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE taken, since you went away, many of the walks which we have taken together; and none of them, I believe, without thoughts of you. I have, though not a good memory in general, yet a good local memory, and can recollect, by the help of a tree or a stile, what you said on that particular spot. For this reason I purpose, when the summer is come, to walk with a book in my pocket; what I read at my fireside I forget, but what I read under a hedge, or at the side of a pond, that pond and that hedge will always bring to my remembrance; and this is a sort of *memoria technica*, which I would recommend to you, if I did not know that you have no occasion for it.

I am reading Sir John Hawkins, and still hold the
VOL. II. D D

same opinion of his book, as when you were here. There are in it, undoubtedly, some awkwardnesses of phrase, and which is worse, here and there some unequivocal indications of a vanity not easily pardonable in a man of his years; but on the whole I find it amusing, and to me at least, to whom every thing that has passed in the literary world within these five and twenty years is new, sufficiently replete with information. Mr. Throckmorton told me about three days since, that it was lately recommended to him by a sensible man, as a book that would give him great insight into the history of modern literature, and modern men of letters, a commendation which I really think it merits. Fifty years hence, perhaps, the world will feel itself obliged to him.

W. C.

TO SAMUEL ROSE, ESQ.

The Lodge, Jan. 24, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR,

WE have heard from my cousin in Norfolk Street; she reached home safely, and in good time. An observation suggests itself, which, though I have but little time for observation making, I must allow myself time to mention. Accidents, as we call them, generally occur when there seems least reason to expect them; if a friend of ours travels far in different roads, and at an unfavourable season, we are reasonably alarmed for the safety of one in whom we take so much interest; yet how seldom do we hear a tragical account of such a journey! It is, on the contrary, at

home, in our yard or garden, perhaps in our parlour, that disaster finds us; in any place, in short, where we seem perfectly out of the reach of danger. The lesson inculcated by such a procedure on the part of Providence towards us seems to be that of perpetual dependence.

Having preached this sermon, I must hasten to a close; you know that I am not idle, nor can I afford to be so; I would gladly spend more time with you, but by some means or other this day has hitherto proved a day of hindrance and confusion.

W. C.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

Weston, Jan. 29, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I SHALL be a better, at least a more frequent correspondent, when I have done with Homer. I am not forgetful of any letters that I owe, and least of all forgetful of my debts in that way to you; on the contrary, I live in a continual state of self-reproach for not writing more punctually; but the old Grecian, whom I charge myself never to neglect, lest I should never finish him, has at present a voice that seems to drown all other demands, and many to which I could listen with more pleasure than even to his *Os rotundum*. I am now in the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*, conversing with the dead. Invoke the Muse in my behalf, that I may roll the stone of Sisyphus with some success. To do it as Homer has done it is, I suppose, in our verse and language, impossible; but I will hope

not to labour altogether to as little purpose as Sisyphus himself did.

Though I meddle little with politics, and can find but little leisure to do so, the present state of things unavoidably engages a share of my attention. But as they say, Archimedes, when Syracuse was taken, was found busied in the solution of a problem, so, come what may, I shall be found translating Homer.

Sincerely yours.

W. C.

END OF VOL. II.

